

Chapter one

'It really is creepy, how much he looks like James.' thought Lily. Even at the age of one, Harry, her son, had such similarities to his father. His hair was just as unruly as James'. She had always told her husband to do something about his hair but James would always flash a dazzling smile at her and continue to run his hand through his hair, making it messier.

'At least he has my eyes.' Lily thought thankfully as she looked down at the playing child in her lap. The emerald green of Harry's eyes made him look even more adorable. The raven haired child was currently sitting on his mother's lap, happily chewing on his toys and every so often looking around as if hoping to find someone.

"Who are you looking for sweetie?" cooed Lily holding Harry close to her.

She knew perfectly well who Harry was looking for. It was the same every evening; around 7 p.m. Harry would eagerly anticipate his father's return from work. Of course for an ordinary one year old it was not possible to be able to determine the time but Harry was no ordinary boy. For that matter neither were Harry's parents. Harry and his parents were a wizard family. James was a pureblood while Lily came from a muggle family. Even so, she was one of the most talented witches of her generation.

As if on cue James arrived through the front door of the house looking a little dismayed, but at the sight of Harry and Lily, his hazel eyes lit up and a small smile graced his face.

"Hey, how's my little man?" asked James as he strode over to Lily and picked up Harry who was gurgling frantically to get his father's attention.

"James! How many times do I have to remind you? He is a boy not a man." Lily reprimanded but only half heartedly.

James just shrugged and replied

“Boy is so... I don’t know. It just sounds weird, like I am telling him off. He’s my ‘little man’.”

Lily smiled at her husband. In her opinion James just didn’t want to sound too fatherly since he was only twenty three years old.

Lily was just about to get up to get dinner when a knock interrupted them. James was instantly on alert. He silently handed Harry over to Lily and drew out his wand. He went over to the door and motioned Lily to go to the other room with Harry. Lily nodded and proceeded to the room quickly. Usually Lily would not take an order from anyone, not even James but ever since that retched prophecy was made things had changed dramatically. They had moved to Godric’s Hollow and only a hand selected few knew where that was. Lily waited apprehensively, wand held in one hand while still carrying Harry. She would hex anyone that as much as cast a shadow over her only son.

She heard James mutter a spell that allowed him to see who was at the door. Suddenly the door was opened and Lily could hear laughing and a voice that she knew all too well. She let out a breath she didn’t even know she was holding. She came out of her room and made her way downstairs. Sure enough there were her husband’s old friends, Sirius and Peter. Sirius had annoyed Lily senseless in her years at Hogwarts, always goofing around with James and getting him into all sorts of trouble. Of course, James wasn’t exactly the innocent party, but since Lily was now his wife she preferred to blame Sirius. Peter was always so quiet that Lily sometimes wondered what he was doing being a Marauder. Remus was the only one Lily could have an intelligent conversation with. Unfortunately, he was not here tonight as he was having his little ‘furry’ problem as Sirius had so sensitively named his condition.

“You could let us know you’re dropping by Padfoot.” Lily remarked as she handed Harry over to his Godfather who enthusiastically reached over and cuddled him as close as he could.

“Where is the fun in that?” He enquired as he gave Harry one of his trademark bark like laugh.

Harry was already waving his arms around and giggling at Sirius and his antics. Lily looked on affectionately at her son; he really was fond

of his Godfather. Peter was also looking on and Lily wasn't sure if she was just imagining it or not but an emotion was overtaking Wormtail. An almost pained expression was evident in his eyes.

"Peter, are you okay?" she asked putting a hand on his shoulder.

Peter quickly looked away and shifted a little uncomfortably.

"Yeah um...I just...um, had a long day that's all..." he looked positively sick.

"Don't talk to me about having long days." James joined in. "I have had the most supremely awful day."

"Oh, what happened?" Sirius quickly asked while still letting Harry pull on his shoulder length, dark locks.

"Well, with the attacks coming in left, right and centre, I don't know how much more we can take before it all goes pear shaped." James had a sad look in his usual sparkly hazel eyes. James loved being an Auror even though he had admitted he had only become one since that was the career path Sirius had chosen but he quickly became very fond of his role as a fighter for the light side.

However, after the prophecy was made about Harry, James was increasingly becoming more and more paranoid. He didn't like the idea of his child being faced with such a huge responsibility, 'Saving the World.' That was his job, not Harry's. So James being James was working day and night to eliminate Voldemort's forces. However, this was becoming more and more stressful. Voldemort always seemed to be one step ahead of the Aurors.

Sirius looked a little disheartened by the look on his best friend's face. Sirius, Remus and James were Aurors, as was Peter but James was the only one who was seeing this war as a reason to live. He wanted it over and done with so that Harry could have a normal life.

Lily sighed and lifted the playing form of Harry from Sirius and gently rocking him, took him upstairs to his room. There she gently placed him in his cot and smoothed his hair down in another futile attempt to make his hair seem somewhat tidy.

“You may think this is funny now, Harry, but trust me when you’re older you won’t find settling your hair amusing at all.” Lily told the small raven haired boy as he giggled and tried to grab his mother’s fingers as she gently stroked his hair. Lily turned and left her boy playing happily in his cot.

She was just making her way downstairs when she suddenly realised with a sickening feeling that something was wrong. It wasn’t something she heard but in fact the lack of sound at all. The three men in the living room were deathly quiet. That in itself was odd since Sirius happened to be present. Lily quickly took out her wand and took a deep breath. What she saw as she entered the room would haunt her for the rest of her days. There on the floor was the body of her James with a growing pool of blood near his head. A broken bottle of firewhiskey was lying not too far away. Sirius was also lying on his back completely unconscious.

“Oh...God...James...oh, James!...Sirius!.. Oh Merlin!”

Lily rushed towards James, completely forgetting the third person who was in the room. If Lily had seen him standing just behind the door she might have been able to stop the tragedy that was looming near. As Lily came towards James, Peter who was pointing his wand towards Lily came up behind her and attacked before she could even reach her husband.

“Stupefy” he whispered.

Lily fell and was engulfed in blackness even before she hit the ground. Peter looked upon his former friends, all of them lying on the ground of their own home, hurt and betrayed by their own friend. He took a shaky breath and tried to calm his beating heart. He was certain that if he hadn’t cast the silencing charm on the door then Lily would have been able to hear his heart thumping in his chest more loudly than the bottle breaking or the attack that James and Sirius has so unrepentantly received.

He cast another glance at his friends and then left the room clumsily and made his way to Harry’s room; all the time repeating under his breath “Forgive me, Harry...Sorry James...Sirius, so sorry.”

He had not thought he would get this far, he had hoped that James or Sirius or even Lily would have been able to stop him from doing this, but since they didn't expect him of any sort of betrayal, let alone an attack and kidnapping of Harry, he had managed this far. He didn't really want this but there was no other way. The Dark Lord was very clear in his instructions. Harry was going to meet his fate at the hands of Voldemort himself.

He slowly opened the door and found Harry sleeping soundly clutching his stuffed toy of a hippogriff. Peter looked down at the sleeping child and felt the horrible sensation of guilt wash over him. He was leading this child to his death. Harry was only one year old and hadn't even said his first proper word yet. Peter had felt just as happy at the birth of Harry as the rest of the Marauders but once the prophecy had come to light, things had changed. This boy was prophesised to bring down the Dark Lord, no, this was not a possibility. The Dark Lord had to win this war. Peter would have power beyond anything he could imagine. The boy had to go. Convincing himself that he was only ensuring his own success he gently lifted Harry and carried him out of the room, downstairs and without another glance at the three bodies lying on the floor, Peter opened the door and left Godric's Hollow forever.

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Peter ran to the edge of the wards placed around the cottage and apparated to his Lord's lair. With shaky hands he placed Harry on the stone floor at Lord Voldemort's feet. Harry was surprisingly still fast asleep and didn't even stir. Peter quickly dropped to his knees and crawled to Voldemort and kissed the hem of his robes while speaking in a shaky and quiet voice:

"Master, I have done what you asked of me. Master, this is Harry."

Voldemort turned his scarlet eyes to the sleeping child and let his face break into a satisfied smile. He was an attractive man with long dark hair and features that had gotten him a lot of interest in his younger years. The only thing that showed the true monster within was his pair of devilishly red eyes which seem to burn into whoever

Chapter Two

Lily sighed and put down the papers she was desperately trying to mark. Potions was a much more difficult subject than most people gave it credit for. She leaned back in her chair and rubbed her tired neck for she had been trying to get all the marking done before she retired to her bed for the night.

She glanced at her surroundings. Her staff quarter at Hogwarts was really homely despite it being located in the dungeons. She had of course given the place a woman's touch and had decorated the cement walls as best she could. Around her desk she had pictures of her loved ones. She always felt more comfortable to be able to look up from her work and see the face of a loved one. She hardly got a chance to see James anymore. What with her teaching Potions and him out on Auror duty, and then they both were members of the Order of the Phoenix. This took up all of their time. Holidays were the only time she got to be with her family.

She would have worked for the Order full time if it wasn't for her son, Damien. He had started Hogwarts two years ago and she had taken up the post as the Potions professor as soon as it was offered to her. She knew Damien was going to moan that he could not get up to anything while his own mother was present but that had hardly been a reason for her not to take up the post. She sighed again and took hold of his photo. It was taken only last year when Damien had been a first year. Unlike his older brother, Damien was not a spitting image of James. He still had the black hair but it was not messy like James. He had James' eyes, deep hazel eyes that he always used to get out of trouble, again very much like his father. His features though were like Lily though. He had his mother's nose, her mouth and even her smile. He had inherited her fiery temper as well. He was quite a mix of the two. Sirius had taken it on himself to turn Damien into a James rival at trouble making. Of course Damien was all too eager to learn from a Marauder.

Lily gazed at the picture of James and felt her heart burn with the pain of missing him. She had not seen him for the last two weeks. But that pain was nothing compared to the pain which took hold of her every time she looked at the picture next to his. The picture had been

taken only 3 days before he was....taken. Lily turned her emerald eyes to the portrait of her eldest son, Harry. He was giggling and pointing at her. Her heart constricted so painfully when she looked at her baby. She looked away from the picture and to the small calendar on her desk, the date today, May 31st. She felt her breath hitch in her chest. 'Two months' she thought 'two months exactly and he would have been sixteen years old, in his sixth year at Hogwarts'.

She had always thought of Harry like this. It was difficult for James to talk to her every time she brought up the subject of Harry and what he would have been doing if he were alive. James had taken the emotional blow of losing a child much harder than had been expected. After all it was *his* friend that had stolen Harry from right under their roof and had handed him over to a monster. James had vowed to take revenge on both Peter and Voldemort for killing Harry. James had been lucky not to have been killed in the attempt that Peter had made. He had lost a lot of blood and the blow to his head had him knocked out for a whole fortnight. He had always blamed himself since he was not able to protect his son. It took him months to finally utter something other than 'I 'm sorry, Harry...forgive me protect you.'

Two years later, Damien's arrival gave James a second life. Only with Damien in his life did James become himself again. He was very protective of their second son, even more so than Lily. He still let Damien have his fun though, and even Lily had to admit that there was probably no other child quite as spoilt. Still, Damien was a good boy, and he never took too much for granted.

Lily tore her eyes away from Harry and rubbed them wearily. She got up and made her way to the small living quarter that held her four poster bed. She was just about to snuggle into her bed when a gentle tapping alerted her to the window. She looked out of her oval window and saw a small brown owl gazing at her. Lily smiled and rushed to the window to let the small creature in. The owl hooted happily and immediately stuck out his leg presenting a small scroll. Lily took it gratefully and didn't notice the owl taking flight immediately. Lily knew the letter was from James as he always sent ministry owls. She quickly tore the envelope open and started reading:

Dear Lily

How are you honey? I hope you are keeping out of trouble. Which reminds me, how is our little troublemaker? Hope you're not keeping him in many detentions. Tell Damy that I have got the World Cup tickets and that we will definitely be going to watch it. Bulgaria and Ireland! Can't wait for it! But ahem... how are you keeping dear?

I will hopefully be coming this weekend to see you; maybe we can go to Hogsmeade when I am over.

Take care sweetheart and give my regards to Damy.

Love James.

Lily smiled and put the letter aside. James and Quidditch, there was just no separating the two. Damien would be pleased though, he had been going on about tickets to this game for the last three weeks. She knew that James supported Ireland while Sirius and Damien had always been Bulgaria fans.

'This ought to be interesting' Lily thought as she crept into her bed and pulled her covers up. She was so tired that she was instantly half asleep. Her last coherent thought was 'I wonder who Harry would've supported...'

xxx

In a darkened room, littered with various books and parchments sat a tall dark haired wizard. His blue eyes were fixed on the glass in his hand, as he sat on his sofa chair. His gaze was fixed to the amber liquid inside the glass as if expecting it to change colour. Truth was that he hardly noticed the liquid. His mind was distracted by another, very disturbing matter.

He knew what he was doing was dangerous, very dangerous. In fact, he was certain others thought he was out of his mind to try and pull such a stunt. Blackmailing the Dark Lord was not something to consider lightly. But he knew that if he succeeded in his task, he would have untold powers. He would be in Lord Voldemort's inner circle, part of the elite group of individuals. He could very well be the most powerful Death Eater. It was worth the risk.

Jason Riley's hand shook as he thought again what he was risking. He brought the glass to his lips and downed the rest of his drink, hoping to drive the cold fear out of his chest.

Just as the empty glass touched the table, the lights flickered momentarily before going out altogether. The Death Eater sat frozen in his chair as the room was thrown into darkness. He clutched his wand tightly in his hand, his knuckles turning white with the force he was using. Slowly he stood up, his eyes darting to all corners of the room.

"Lumos" he whispered and the end of his wand lit but it seemed that the light was still not enough to be comforting.

Gripping his lit wand tightly in his hand, Jason Riley walked across the room, towards the door. He knew *he* had come. He was certain of it.

Jason opened the door and walked out, his mind telling him he should not be this afraid. Standing at the threshold of his door, Jason waited to see if he could see anyone. He held his lit wand high above his head but he couldn't see anyone.

Just as he walked out of the room, he felt it, the sudden change in the air around him. He could almost taste the magic in the air. He stopped where he was and stood still. Fighting down the panic, he spoke, without turning around to face his visitor.

"I was certain you were going to come." He said, speaking with his back turned.

"And yet, you still weren't prepared." Came the reply.

Jason turned around slowly to face his visitor. He was trying his best to peer through the darkness to see him. He could just make out his silhouette.

"You are here to kill me?" Jason asked, fear pulsing through him.

The figure stepped forward so the light from Jason's wand could wash over him. Jason took in the appearance of the wizard standing

before him. Clad in dark robes, face hidden behind a silver mask which only exposed the emerald green eyes, stood the one who all the Death Eaters had come to fear. The Dark Lord's son. The Dark Prince.

"You betrayed Lord Voldemort. Your punishment is death."

Jason noticed that although the boy before him was holding his wand, he wasn't pointing it at him. He tried to use this to his advantage.

"If you give me another chance, if you could only give me a chance to apologise. I didn't mean to...AVADA KEDVRA!" Jason made a sudden move, firing the killing curse at his opponent.

The silver masked wizard leapt out of the way, missing the jet of green light. Jason quickly too aim and tried once again to kill him.

Before the words left his mouth properly, his wand was suddenly wrenched from his hand. The force of the nonverbal disarming spell was so sudden and powerful, it caused the wand to be ripped away from him. The room was plunged into darkness once more as Jason's wand extinguished when it hit the floor.

The Death Eater took his chance and ducked low to avoid getting hit by any curses. He darted towards the staircase, keeping as low as possible.

He had raced down the stairs and darted towards the fireplace, aiming to floo out or here. He had only reached the bottom of the steps when he felt the tip of a wand press into the back of his neck.

"Up!" came the command and the Death Eater slowly rose to his feet.

He was a good three or four inches taller than the Dark Prince but that didn't comfort him in anyway.

"Please" Jason tried again.

The lights flickered on again and Jason found himself looking straight into a pair of startling green eyes, which to his dismay, had no pity in them.

“You’re a traitor, and traitors only have one punishment.” The Dark Prince hissed at him.

Before Jason could do anything a jet of green light struck him straight between the eyes and the Death Eater fell to the ground, dead.

The Dark Prince only took one look at the corpse beside his feet before turning around and leaving. His assignment completed.

[illegible]

Chapter Three

Lily was not amused. She had been looking forward to seeing James for over a fortnight now, and as soon as he had come, they both had not even been able to say two words to each other before Professor Dumbledore had requested an urgent Order meeting. James had not even been able to say hello to Damien yet. She sat with her arms crossed against her chest and was trying not to get her foul mood to show. Honestly, a couple of minutes with her husband were all she wanted, was that too much to ask?

Her thoughts were cut short when the room suddenly quietened down. James took his seat next to Lily and gently squeezed her hand. She looked up at him and gave him a half heartened smile. Looking around the room she saw all the familiar faces that were all looking tired and a little dishelved. There was the forever paranoid Mad-eye Moody, sitting next to Auror Kingsley Shacklebolt. Tonks was clearly noticeable with her bubble gum pink hair. There was Remus and Sirius sitting next to James. Professor McGonagall and Snape were sitting near the front and were currently eyeing Professor Dumbledore with curious looks. Next to them were two empty seats that Lily tried to ignore. She didn't think she could bear thinking about them again. She looked around, there were other members also present that she was not very familiar with, and most were from the Ministry of Magic.

Her attention was drawn to the Headmaster who now stood in front of all the members. Albus Dumbledore was looking immensely tired and worn out pretty much like everyone else. He cleared his throat and the already quiet room hushed into complete silence. He could see the expressions most were wearing; there were a few who looked annoyed at the last minute meeting while others were looking as if they were trying to prepare themselves for more tragic news. Dumbledore decided to share the reason for this meeting.

"Ladies, Gentlemen. Many thanks for being able to attend this meeting at such short notice. I am aware many of you had to cancel or rearrange your plans so I will not take much more of your time." Here he gave a significant look at Lily who seemed to blush and lower her gaze to her hands in her lap.

"It's okay, Lils, No one else noticed." Sirius joked to her.

Lily threw him a sharp look but didn't say anything.

"The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the strange occurrences these past few months." Dumbledore carried on. "As you all are aware, there have been a number of attacks on Death Eaters in the past few months. Many were killed, some were gravely injured, but on purposely left alive. Many of these Death Eaters gave themselves to the Dementors of Azkaban *willingly* to save themselves from any other attacks. This shouldn't be a cause of worry but since neither the Ministry nor the Order has taken responsibility for carrying out these attacks, it leads to the question of the identity of this attacker."

The room was silent, every eye was on Dumbledore.

"The most recent attack was carried out last night. A Death Eater named Jason Riley was killed in his home. The Ministry claim not to be responsible and we know that the Order didn't do this. It leads to the question of who is tracking down these Death Eaters and killing them." Dumbledore finished sounding very worried.

"What does it matter? Whoever this is, they are killing Death Eaters. They are helping us. Why should this be a cause of worry?" Moody asked in his gruff voice.

A few murmured their agreement to Moody's statement.

"It is a cause of worry since we don't know who is doing this and for what reason." Dumbledore explained.

"Maybe there is another secret society formed. Like the Order, maybe someone has formed another group to fight against You-Know-Who and they are targeting Death Eaters." Tonks supplied.

"That is a possibility." Dumbledore inclined his head in her direction. "However, I think it would be wise to find out the truth of this matter as soon as possible."

Lily noticed that there was something Dumbledore was stopping himself from saying. She had spent a lot of time with Dumbledore,

firstly as a student and then as an Order member and finally as a member of his staff, to see that the age old wizard was unsure of saying what was on his mind.

“Dumbledore, is there more?” she asked wondering if he had some more news.

Dumbledore looked at Lily and his blue eyes fixed to her as he struggled to say what was on his mind. With a sigh, he began.

“I have a suspicion, and at this point that is all it is, but from reading the case reports on the deaths of the Death Eaters, I think Voldemort may be responsible for the deaths.”

There was a sudden intake of breath at the mention of the Dark Lord’s name. Dumbledore gave a mental sigh. How many times had he told them that fear of a name was just plain silly. Voldemort wasn’t going to appear if you said his name out loud.

“Why do you think that?” McGonagall asked, composing herself the best she could.

“As I have said, it is only a suspicion. What I do know for a fact is that if Voldemort’s men had been targeted and killed like this, he would not be sitting back and allowing it to continue. From the reports we have, it doesn’t suggest that Voldemort is planning anything to stop these killings. It seems he is actually happy with the demise of these men. It makes me think that maybe these men have wronged him in some way and so he has arranged to have them killed.” Dumbledore finished.

“But why would he want to kill his own men? It doesn’t make sense.” Remus asked.

“I don’t know. This is why I think it is a good idea to find out as much information as we can.” Here Dumbledore turned to look at Snape.

“Severus, I have to ask you to try and find as much information as you can. I have a list of all the names of the deceased Death Eaters. See if you can find out what mission they were a part of before they died. See if they upset Voldemort in any way.”

Chapter Four

Harry sighed and tried again to concentrate. It was already difficult to get a hang on this stupid curse without the annoying pain in his scar that was breaking his concentration. He tried once more to pay attention to Bella as she ranted on and on about how he had to focus on causing pain and actually wanting the bone to break. It was the only way the bone-breaking curse would work. Her talk about pain was making Harry feel his own headache worsen. He threw her an angry glare as she was clearly enjoying the fact that Harry for once, was not able to pick up on something that she herself was an expert in.

“Aww what’s the matter Prince, having an off day are we?” she sniggered while watching him rub his forehead in frustration.

“Lay off Bella, I’m in no mood for your crazy antics today.” he replied while kneading his forehead with his knuckles.

She immediately wiped the smirk of her face and ran over to Harry.

“Harry, are you okay? Is it your scar again? Sorry Harry, I didn’t realise.”

She was apologising while prying his hands away from his forehead and trying to determine how much pain Harry was in. Harry tried to block it best he could. He hated this. He was sick of being a mood determiner for his father. When he was younger, Malfoy and other inner circle Death Eaters used to ask Harry if his scar hurt before they went in to see Lord Voldemort. If it didn’t hurt before it definitely hurt after they had gone in to see him.

Harry gritted his teeth and tried to get away from Bella. He could handle this without her.

“Bella, I’m fine. Just leave me alone for now. We can continue with training after father calms down.”

“Alright, Harry. Just let me know when you’re ready.”

Bella let go of him and made her way out of his chambers. She got to the door and turned around to see him still rubbing his scar. 'He's too proud for his own good' she thought.

"Harry, I will be right back with some pain relief potion, and I don't want to hear about you not needing it!"

Harry smiled weakly at her and nodded his head slightly. He would not say no to any sort of pain relief just now. He really did like Bella; it was only when she got too motherly on him that it made him uncomfortable.

She had trained him the most, along with his father. She was a good teacher and he could see that she cared for him. He wasn't sure if that was wise as his father had always taught him that feeling of love and care only weakened one's power. He couldn't really complain since he cared about Bella too. She had brought him up after all.

He was busy thinking and didn't even hear Bella come back in the room.

"Here" she said as she thrust the small vial in his hand.

Harry took it gratefully and downed the potion in one gulp. The effect was instant but the pain in Harry's scar was only dulled a bit. It would only go away completely when his father has got rid of his anger, as that was what was causing Harry such intense discomfort.

"Why does he always decide to get immensely annoyed or angry when I'm around." asked Harry miserably.

"Don't be disrespectful, Harry!" snapped Bella immediately.

Harry managed to chuckle slightly to himself before throwing her a green eyed glare.

"Well excuse me for not enjoying having my head split in two!"

"He doesn't do it on purpose, Harry. He would never want you to suffer, let alone on his account."

Harry was about to respond when a particularly nasty throb of pain caused him to clasp his hand over his forehead and let out an angry hiss of pain. Bella was instantly at Harry's side worrying about what was making her Lord so angry.

"That does it! I'm going to see what's getting him so worked up!" with that said Harry got to his feet, grabbed his silver mask and charged through the doors.

He was in front of his father's oak doors in minutes. Harry was ten years old when he had learned all the secret passages in and out of the Riddle Manor. Harry had now got the mask over his face and knocked once on the door. Without waiting for a reply Harry, charged through into his father's private meeting room. Lord Voldemort was surprised too see his young heir in such a hurry but quickly realised why he was there. Instantly he began his mantra to calm down the rage that was bubbling within him. He also lifted the Crucio curse that he had placed Crabbe under. The pathetic Death Eater got slowly to his feet, his limbs still jerking violently.

"Master... f-forgive me...Master...it w-will n-never happen..."

"Silence!"

Voldemort hissed and motioned to Crabbe to get out of his sight. Thanking the entry of the Dark Prince, Crabbe quickly made his exit.

Once he was gone Harry removed his mask and looked directly at his father.

Lord Voldemort calmed down by just looking at Harry. He smiled and beckoned Harry to come closer. Harry took a couple of steps toward him and stopped. Harry was the only one his father didn't allow to bow down in front of him.

"Harry, what's the matter?" he asked.

Harry cocked up an eyebrow at his father's question.

"I just thought I would come and see what was angering you father before my head burst open!"

Harry said this with the most venomously sweet voice he could muster.

Lord Voldemort would have instantly killed anyone else who has dared to speak to him in such a tone. However Harry was different to everyone else. After all he was Lord Voldemort's only son.

"That imbecile Crabbe has brought some disturbing news. It turns out that Riley had an accomplice."

Harry's anger and frustration completely vanished and he instantly went into his warrior mode.

"What are your orders, father?" he asked with no emotions visible on his face.

Lord Voldemort walked over to his son and placed his pale bony hands on Harry's shoulders and stared into his eyes.

"Finish the rat!" he said and Harry's eyes instantly became cold and devoid of all emotion and feelings.

He allowed his father to enter his mind and soon he had all that he needed to complete his assignment. Harry now had a name, an address and a face. That was all he needed.

Harry was about to turn away when his father tightened his grip on him and placed a long finger under his chin, lifting his head slightly so that he could peer into those emerald eyes.

"I am upset that you were discomforted by this Harry. You know how much I hate to pull you into my emotions."

Harry smiled, a little warmth spread into his green orbs.

"I know father, it just got a little too much this time which is why I came to see what was wrong."

Voldemort watched as Harry turned around and left his chambers. He had never imagined such a link would be formed with his heir when he gave Harry that scar. Sometimes he even felt sorry for the poor kid.

Chapter Five

James looked around the empty building. Why would anyone opt to live in an empty warehouse was beyond him. He moved silently forward before nonverbally giving the signal to two Aurors to check the back of the building.

They had received information that a Death Eater was hiding out here. Exactly why this Death Eater had chosen a run down, freezing warehouse for a home was a mystery. James and a team of Aurors were sent to investigate and capture the Death Eater.

James had come with a team of four Aurors. His best friend, Sirius was accompanied by a fellow Order member, Kingsley Shacklebolt. The other two Aurors were not from the Order but James knew them fairly well.

Sirius and Kingsley stayed at James' side while the other two Aurors silently crept to the back of the building. So far there was no sign of this Death Eater.

James suddenly caught sight of a short, blond haired man, sitting with his back pressed up against the wall. His face was hidden behind his hands and he seemed to be shivering. Whether it was from cold or fear, James couldn't tell.

James, Sirius and Kingsley were just about to approach him, their wands were drawn and pointed at him before a sight stopped them and forced them to hide behind the wall.

The Aurors watched as a boy, dressed all in black, except for the silver mask which covered the whole of his face walked over to the Death Eater. He moved swiftly but without making any noise. It was almost as if he had cast a silencing charm on himself. If James didn't see him, he would never have known that he was here.

The Death Eater looked up and as his blue eyes met with the boy dressed in black. He let out a stifled sound that was half a sob and half a cry.

"I knew you would find me." croaked the man in a voice that almost trembled.

"Where else would I look for a rat!" the boy whispered in a deadly voice.

James was taken aback. He could tell straight away that the boy was young. But there was something else about the kid's voice that unsettled him. He pushed it to the back of his mind. Now wasn't the time to think about that. He gestured to Sirius and Kingsley to move at his signal. Both Aurors signalled that they understood.

"I haven't done anything! It was all Riley! He was the one who was trying to blackmail the Dark Lord! I would never dream of doing something like that! I swear I wouldn't!" the man began sobbing.

James was certain he had never seen anything as pathetic as him.

"If you hadn't done anything, then why did you run, Hunt? Why didn't you return to him?" the boy asked in menace.

"Please, Dark Prince! Please have mercy?" the man, Hunt, said looking up at the boy with a pleading expression.

James shared a look with Sirius, who was smirking as well. 'Dark Prince?' that was a rather unusual name. James looked back at the boy and watched as the boy didn't give in to the grown man's pleas.

James couldn't understand why the man was so afraid of a mere boy. He didn't even have a wand. He was standing before the Death Eater with no visible weapons in his hands.

"You are going to kill me without even giving me a chance to fully explain my side of the story?" asked a truly terrified Hunt.

"You have no story to tell and I have wasted enough time on you already."

The boy said this while simultaneously bringing his wand out of his robes. His voice betrayed no emotion but James felt the anger course through the boy's words. The boy certainly hated Hunt.

"Why are *you* going to kill me? What have I done to hurt *you*?" Hunt asked.

"You betrayed my father therefore you betrayed me, He doesn't forget and I don't forgive."

The boy said this and pointed his wand directly between Hunt's eyes. James quietly prepared to launch himself onto the boy. He wasn't going to let Hunt die. He was here to apprehend Hunt, not to watch him get killed. He hated Voldemort and his Death Eaters with vigour but he knew that if this Death Eater was on the run from Voldemort, then he could be very useful. He would probably give information willingly to them, information that could be very useful to get to Voldemort.

Through his fear, Hunt managed to scoff at the boy's words.

"Yes, well, I never thought Lord Voldemort and his son would be the kind to forgive and forget!"

At these words James froze. What did he just say? This boy was Voldemort's son?

James looked around at the equally shocked looking Sirius and Kingsley. They both had gone rather pale. Voldemort had a son? The revelation made cold shivers run down their spines.

James turned around to look at the boy and suddenly saw him in a different light altogether. All of a sudden the young boy looked a lot more dangerous than before.

"If you're done talking nonsense, Hunt, take your last breath!" the boy said with cruelty as he took aim.

James had to stop him, now was as good a time as any. James and the other two Aurors rushed to rescue Hunt.

James and the other two Aurors, Kingsley and Sirius, dove at the boy at the same time. Three sets of red lights sped there way toward the young boy, as the three Aurors yelled 'Stupefy', but the boy turned around and brought up a shield that just deflected the spells. He

didn't even look surprised at the attack but rather like he was expecting it all long.

Before James and Sirius could even reach him the boy spun around and delivered a fantastic kick, straight into Kingsley's chest, as he was the first one to get near him. James gasped as the impact sent Kingsley flying in the other direction. He quickly recovered from the shock and fired a spell at the boy.

"STUPEFY" he yelled but the boy just side stepped it as if it was the easiest thing in the world. James was utterly shocked. The boy was a wonder. He was facing three fully grown Aurors and had not even broken out in a sweat yet.

"INCENDIO" the boy yelled aiming straight for an oncoming Sirius. James watched in horror as the hem of Sirius' robes caught fire.

"Sirius!" he yelled but Sirius had calmly put out the fire with a flick of his wand.

The other two Aurors that James had sent to the other side of the warehouse made their move. They rushed towards the boy, shouting out curses. The Dark Prince blocked the oncoming curses with relative ease and moved to face Sirius and the two other Aurors while James moved toward Hunt who was rooted to the spot in fear and confusion.

"STUPEFY, PERTIFICUS TOTALUS" the boy yelled at the two Aurors, one fell immediately.

The other one had time to draw up a shield but was knocked to the ground when the boy delivered another kick this time in his stomach and, using the side of his hand, he smashed the Auror to the ground by hitting him in the back of the neck.

Now it was only Sirius and Kingsley left facing the teenager while James moved quickly towards Hunt. James grabbed a hold of the Death Eater who seemed too afraid to move.

"If you want to live, I suggest you come with me!" James said to him.

Hunt's eyes moved over to see the fight happening between the Dark Prince and the Aurors. He numbly turned to face James.

"We want to arrest you. He wants to kill you. Choose!" James said icily.

That seemed to snap him out of his fear induced daze and he quickly got to his feet.

James grabbed a hold of him from the collar of his robes and ran across to the exit. He knew that the warehouse had anti-apparation wards as he had tested that before entering the building. Hunt was probably trying to protect himself.

James had almost made it to the door when he heard a spell he was not familiar with and then a terrible pain filled scream. He turned around to see Kingsley on the ground supporting what looked like a broken arm and leg. Sirius was physically fighting with the boy now. Sirius was a fair bit taller than the boy and for a moment had easily held onto him.

He had grabbed a hold of his wand arm and with his other hand he had grabbed him around the neck. Sirius then twisted him around so that he was holding the boy in front of him almost like a shield. He wrapped his arm around the boy's neck as if attempting to suffocate him. The boy wasn't even struggling much with Sirius. As James watched in awe the boy threw back his head and it smashed into Sirius' face. The back of the boy's head has slammed hard in Sirius' face and had caused Sirius to let go of him. The boy swung around and smashed his fist into the side of his head. Sirius staggered to the side but tried to fight back. He sent a stinging hex at the boy but he had his shield brought up so fast that Sirius took a step back in puzzlement. The boy then fired a hex at Sirius which he only just managed to dodge.

James has seen enough. He had to get Hunt out of here. If he didn't leave now Hunt could lose his life. James grabbed the shivering fool and headed out the door as fast as his legs could carry him. He only got a few paces away from the old factory when he heard the doors fly open behind him. He kept on running with Hunt, it was only a few more minutes, and then he would be outside the wards and he could

apparate back with Hunt safe and sound. James hated Hunt but could not allow anything to happen to him while he was on duty. If he got Hunt back to the Ministry, they could possibly get important information out of him.

However James was just within the bounds of the ward when he felt a spell zoom past him and hit Hunt in the back. Hunt fell heavily to the ground. James froze and turned to look at Hunt. He was still breathing. James saw the boy approach almost calmly and instantly James stood over Hunt blocking him from any spells. The boy stopped a few steps away from James. At a first glance, he looked completely at ease, but as James looked closely, he could see that there was something wrong. The boy was holding his wand loosely in his hand but the rest of his body seemed to be held tense. He gave James a cold glare.

“Out of the way, Potter! This doesn’t concern you!”

Again James felt a rush of unease sweep over him. There was something about him that was making the hairs on the back of his neck stand. James stood defiantly, protecting Hunt, with his wand pointing straight at the boy’s heart.

“I think it does since you took down my entire team in there!”

Before James could do anything, the boy had sent him flying across the grounds. James landed with a painful thud on the hard concrete ground and was momentarily unable to move. James struggled to get up but managed to get to his feet quickly and spun around to see the Dark Prince bring his wand down on Hunt who was still on the ground and was now pleading for his life.

“No...no...please...my lord...have mercy!” he stuttered while trying to crawl away.

The boy took aim and quietly uttered the cursed words.

“Avada Kedavra”

James gasped as he saw the green light leave the boy’s wand and hit Hunt squarely in the chest. Hunt collapsed on the ground and even at

this distance there was no mistaking the fact that Hunt was dead. Anger coursed through James as he saw the boy walk away from the body as if nothing had happened. Within seconds James was blocking the boy's path, wand pointed at him.

James stepped closer to the boy. It was so difficult to make out anything about the boy with that awful mask. The only thing he could see was his eyes. But even that was difficult to make out since it was now dark and James vision was still blurry at hitting his head so hard on the ground.

"Out of my way, Potter, I really don't have time to deal with you today."

"Really! Well let's make an appointment shall we? How's Friday afternoon for ya?" James mocked feeling his temper rise.

This kid was really something. He had single-handedly wiped out five Aurors and killed one person, and he had not one single scratch on him. James still couldn't believe the force that had thrown him across the grounds had come from him. It was if a hammer had been used to punch him across the grounds.

"Move Potter!"

"Make me you little shit!"

This seemed to light something in the boy's eyes. He pocketed his wand and took another step towards him. James was completely confused. 'Why did he pocket his wand, what was he playing at?' In his moment of confusion the boy made his move

"As you wish."

As he said this emerald eyes locked with hazel ones. With a movement with his hand James was thrown violently into the air and he landed painfully on his back. James gritted his teeth as pain exploded in his back. He ignored this and quickly got up and saw the boy move towards the edge of the anti-apparation wards. James pointed his wand at him. He couldn't let him get away.

“STUPEFY” James yelled but the boy had easily moved out of the way.

James took aim once more but something came flying towards him and struck his wand holding arm. James gasped in pain as his wand went clattering to the ground. He blinked in surprise at the sight of his blood, as it ran down from the ghastly cut on his forearm and trickled down to his hand. Something had sliced his arm open. He knew it wasn't a spell as he had actually felt something sharp cut his arm open.

James quickly picked his wand up from the ground and focused on the boy. He could figure out what had happened later, right now he had to capture the Dark Prince.

He painfully took aim and fired at him.

“SORUPTO” he hissed and a jet of yellow light left his wand and cut the boy on his arm. James watched as the boy gasped at the pain the cutting hex had caused. James had his wand pointed at the boy's heart.

Before James could fire another curse at him he felt his words choke in his throat. James dropped his wand and grabbed at his neck as a searing pain had made his vision turn white momentarily.

James could feel his warm blood run through his fingers and down his robes. The entire left side of his neck throbbed in agony. James' breath hitched in his chest as he struggled to breathe.

He fell to his knees and had both hands clutched around his neck, in an effort to stop the blood flow. Everything around him seemed to slow down as he fell to his front. He forced his eyes to stay open and tried to cry out for help, to call to Sirius but nothing came out. His eyes caught sight of a small metal object lying in the grass before him. It was something he had never seen before.

It was small and made of metal with four razor sharp points. It looked like a hand held blade. It was stained with blood. His blood.

James realised that this was what the Dark Prince had used to attack him. His arm and neck was sliced open using these blades. He had not even seen the boy throw them. He had seen the boy reach inside his robes but the rest had been a blur.

James could hear shouts in the distance, but he couldn't make sense of what was being said. His world was engulfed in darkness and then he knew no more.

[illegible]

Chapter Six

"This is just so unfair!" whined Damien. He was sitting in the Great Hall for his breakfast and was in an unusually foul mood. Ron Weasley and his fellow Gryffindors were all at the table and were sympathizing with the anguished teen.

"I know it sucks man, but what can you do." Ron said this while shovelling half a dozen pancakes onto his plate and smearing them with golden honey syrup.

"This was supposed to be the best game ever! I've been waiting weeks to go to it and now he just decides not to show up. I mean not even an owl to say he had to cancel."

"Still whining about it Damien, I mean honestly it's only a game, your father has other things to attend to you know."

Hermione Granger joined the table with Ginny Weasley and sat down to glare at Damien Potter.

"What would you know about Quidditch, Hermione? After all, it's not something you can learn out of a book!" Damien spat at her. He was usually not this rude to anyone but Hermione was always annoying him about something or another, just because she was the new fifth year prefect.

"Oh come now Dami, I am sure your dad had something important come up, after all he is not one to miss such a big game either." said Ginny comfortingly.

This actually was a good point thought Damien. Why would his dad miss such a game? He was about the biggest fan of Quidditch ever, so much so that he was the Hogwarts best chaser for Gryffindor in his school days. The trophy was still in the trophy room on the third corridor.

"He could have sent an owl." mumbled Damien but was now beginning to get worried about his dad. He had only run into him once since he had got back from his Auror duties. He had looked pretty tired and run down but his dad was never one to complain. Damien

hoped that he was okay and just 'forgot' about the game and was still sleeping in.

He looked over at his friends to take his mind away from disturbing thoughts.

"So what are you guys up to today?" He asked since it was Saturday and the students could do whatever they pleased.

"Probably go see Hagrid and then go to Quidditch practise." replied Ron with just about the same enthusiasm that Damien felt right now.

Ron and Damien were quite good friends even though they had a three year age gap. Ron had five older brothers but he fancied having a younger brother rather than a sister. Even though he doted on Ginny, he always said that a younger brother would have been cool. Damien, being the only child, was hungry for any sibling relationship. The Weasleys treated Damien like family.

"Sounds cool, think I'll join you." replied Damien, if he couldn't watch the match today he would play in one himself.

"What about you Ginny, fancy a game?" he asked the red headed girl, as she was bent over the table whispering urgently with Hermione.

"What! I...oh...no...no thanks Damy. I have stuff to do in the library." she replied turning a little red as a blush crept to her cheeks. Damien shared a look with Ron and both boys sighed and rolled there eyes.

"Ginny, girl give it up, you are not going to find him." Ron tried to tell the stubborn girl.

"Whatever Ronald! Just mind your own business." She snapped at him.

Ron sighed and turned to Damien. Both boys had their fun at ridiculing and teasing the girl senseless for the last two months, but now they were starting to feel sorry for the clueless girl.

Just over two months ago Ginny had had a near death experience. It was when she had gone to Hogsmeade on her school trip. Her family

were also visiting Hogsmeade and were all meeting up for lunch. Suddenly while they were in the Three Broomsticks having drinks, there was frantic shouting and commotion outside. It turned out the several Death Eaters had come and were terrorizing the people of Hogsmeade looking for someone. Ginny was told by her family and teachers to get back to Hogwarts along with all the other students. Her two eldest brothers along with her father had run outside to fight off the Death Eaters.

Ginny was doing just as she was told but was cornered just as five Death Eaters had burst into the pub and began terrorizing their way through the students and adults. Ginny did the most sensible thing she could, she ran along with Hermione and some other kids to the back of the pub and out into an alleyway. They ran hand in hand, no idea where they were heading as long as it was as far away from the Death Eaters. Unluckily they ran straight into a group of four Death Eaters. They had grinned wickedly and decided that the two girls were perfect for having a little *fun*.

Ginny and Hermione ended up running into an old building and began climbing the stairs to hide from the horrid men. Unfortunately they had been followed by these men and the two girls were forced to run to the top of this old abandoned building. It had something like twenty floors and the poor girls were completely exhausted when they reached the top. They quickly realised that they were trapped on the roof of this tall building by the Death Eaters. They had laughed and ridiculed the girls. Both were near tears and didn't know how they could survive. Both had their wands and had taken them out in a feeble attempt to protect themselves. Even Hermione, being in fifth year at Hogwarts, didn't know any defensive spells that could protect her or the younger girl.

Just as both girls were losing any hopes of survival, the doors burst open and Charlie Weasley followed by three other young boys came to the rescue, and started duelling the Death Eaters. It was then that Ginny was almost hit by a spell that had gone off track. Ginny had managed to dodge the spell, thanks to her training in Quidditch, but lost her balance and since she was backed up against the edge of the roof she went toppling over it. She had just managed, by a streak of luck, to hold on to a dangling wire from the edge of the roof. She

clung on for dear life but could tell that the wire was not strong enough to hold her weight. Charlie had appeared over the edge and was just leaning over to grab her when two things happened at once.

Charlie was grabbed from behind by a Death Eater and the wire that was saving Ginny's life snapped. Ginny went plummeting down twenty floors. She screamed and closed her eyes, not wanting to see the ground and her death rushing up to meet her. But before she hit the ground she was suddenly grabbed by a pair of strong hands. She felt her head slam against a strong chest and she instinctively threw her arms around the person and clung on for dear life. She could feel the rushing air in her face and knew that they were flying. She forced her brown eyes open and looked at the person that had saved her from a truly horrible death. Emerald eyes met hers and she felt instantly drawn into them. She blinked the tears away from her eyes, not sure if it was the air or her near death that had brought them out. Her mysterious saviour had his face covered in a silver mask and other than his eyes, nothing was visible. She realised that they were flying on a broom and that the speed that they were going at was phenomenal. She couldn't open her mouth to speak. There was too much air rushing at her. She moved her face away from the direction of the wind and instead buried her face into this mysterious guy's chest. She felt oddly comforted by this person. He has one strong arm around her waist and one on the broom, flying exceptionally well.

Ginny only became aware of her surroundings when she felt her feet hit the solid ground and she was shakily taken off the broom and placed gently on the ground. She looked up and realised she was sitting just outside the gates of Hogwarts. She could see some teachers, in the distance, hastily make their way towards her. She looked up at her saviour again. He had mounted off his broom and was leaning over her as if to make sure she was okay. Ginny became aware that she was trembling and silently thanked the fact that she was sitting down otherwise she would have collapsed onto the ground.

"You okay?"

Ginny gasped slightly, the voice sounded so young. She had thought this person was a lot older, with the whole saving her thing and flying

like a professional Quidditch player. His voice was gentle but also strong at the same time. 'He can't be more than a year or two older than me' Ginny thought. Before she could reply the boy looked up and saw the Hogwarts teachers running toward them. Without another word he mounted his broom and kicked off the ground.

"Wait!" cried Ginny but it was too late. The boy with the brilliant emerald eyes was gone. Ginny wasn't even aware when Professor McGonagall and Professor June reached her and led her back up to the castle.

Since then Ginny had become obsessed with her saviour. She had spent hours just talking to Hermione, and any one else that would listen to her, about him, about how beautiful his eyes were, how strong his arms were, how softly spoken he was. Hermione had felt so sorry for her. She could see how infatuated Ginny had become with this mysterious boy, and why shouldn't she? After all, he had saved her life. She decided that she would help her in any way that she could to try and find out the identity of this 'green-eyed wonder'.

Ginny was convinced that the boy must have come to Hogwarts at some point since he was only a little older than her and must have had an education. Also she was convinced that she had seen those green eyes before, maybe he was an older student she had seen in the corridors or someone who had gone to school in the days of Bill or Charlie and had come over to the Burrow once. She was becoming more and more desperate in her search to find him, and was spending every available moment going through the old yearbooks in the library looking for him. Hermione had tried to point out the fact that Ginny had not seen his face and therefore wouldn't be able to recognise his photo, but Ginny had dismissed this by simply saying that she would 'recognise those emerald eyes anywhere'.

Ron had not been at Hogsmeade that day, since he had taken a bludger to the head the previous day, and was recovering in the hospital wing. Therefore he had not seen the severity of the situation and had relentlessly teased Ginny about her 'mystery bloke'.

'Maybe he's just really ugly which is why he was wearing that mask.' he would say to her causing Ginny to dive for her wand and hex him

into the next century. However now, two months later Ginny was still as determined as ever to find him, and Ron was beginning to feel sorry for his sister.

“Come on Gin, Look at the day outside, it’s perfect for a game, you can continue your pointless search later on.” he said, obviously thinking that this was the right way to convince her.

Ginny fixed him with a death glare before motioning to Hermione that they better get going. Before they had left the hall though, a very puffy eyed and worried looking Lily Potter had entered the hall looking frantically over to the Gryffindor table. She spotted Damien immediately and rushed over to him, nearly knocking the two girls to the floor in the process.

“Oh...Sorry girls...Sorry!” she mumbled as she continued to rush over to her son.

“Damien!...I need to speak to you...come with me!” she spoke quickly to him, completely ignoring the rest of the Gryffindors that were eyeing her suspiciously.

“Good morning to you too mum.” Damien replied cheekily but stopped as he took in his mothers very worried face and tearstained cheeks.

“Mum!...What...What happened!” he asked as he rose out of his chair.

“Professor Potter, is everything okay?” asked Ron who was also now standing up and looking at his friends mum with a bewildered expression on his face.

Lily, however either didn’t hear him or completely ignored him.

“Damien, come with me now!” and with that she gripped Damien’s arm and led him out of the hall. Once they were in the main hall she stood with Damien facing her and quickly pulled out a small colourful ball.

“Portus” she whispered and told Damien to hold onto the ball. Damien did as he was told and three seconds later felt a familiar pull at his navel as he and his mother used a port key to leave Hogwarts.

Chapter Seven

“Mum, what’s going on? Why are we at St Mungo’s? Mum!” Damien was trying not to panic but the tears that had just appeared in his mother’s eyes and her shaky breathing was making Damien very nervous.

“Damien...j-just come w-with me.” Lily managed to croak out and took her son’s hand, gently this time, and led him to the lifts on the other side of the hall.

“It’s your dad Dady, he was hurt last night.”

Damien felt his entire world crash around him. His dad had been hurt before, being an Auror, it was an occupational hazard, but never before did he end up in the ‘Serious Injuries caused by Illegal Curses’ Ward. He had never seen his mum this upset either which made him think that his dad might be badly injured this time.

“What happened?” he asked as they made their way up to the seventh floor. They were alone in the lift.

“He was on duty last night and was injured during a duel.” Lily was trying her level best to keep her voice steady. It was unfair to upset Damien more than he was already.

“What duty?” Damien asked, knowing his mother would understand his real question, Auror or Order.

“The first one.” she said as she never said the word Order of the Phoenix when outside safe walls. She knew her son always referred to the Order as James’ second job.

The doors opened and Lily and Damien rushed out of the lift and ran to room number five. They were not at all surprised to see a very tired and disgruntled Sirius sitting next to James. Damien breathed a huge sigh of relief as he saw his dad sitting up in bed taking animatedly to Sirius. He looked really pale, and there was a bandage wrapped around his neck and one on his forearm. Other than looking really tired, James seemed to be okay.

James looked up at the two new arrivals and his face broke into a smile. Sirius also looked like he had been through hell and back, but he let his handsome face break into a smile at the sight of his pup, Damien.

“Hey guys, come on in.” James called out and extended his hand to take Lily’s as she rushed to his side. Damien still stood at the door leaning against it to steady his heart at the sight of his dad and godfather, looking so beat up.

“Hey pup, come on in.” beckoned Sirius and gave him a lopsided grin. Damien walked in slowly and sat next to his dad.

“Oh come on guys, cheer up, I’m fine.” James tried to get his wife and son to stop looking as if he was already dead and they were attending his funeral.

“Fine! You call this fine. My God James, you could have been killed...” Lily stopped suddenly and looked towards a much shaken Damien who was staring at the blue swirls pattern of the bedspread.

“Damien, I’m sorry, I should not have taken you out of school like that. I had just found out about your Dad and I just reacted without thinking.”

Damien looked up his mother.

“You did the right thing Mum. I would never have forgiven you if you had not brought me here. Just don’t scream at Dad, he looks as if he’s been through hell.”

“Oh, thanks son, I’ll remember that!” smiled James trying to look offended. Damien smiled back at him.

“So, are you gonna tell us what happened to both of you?” he asked already knowing the answer.

“Can’t pup, top secret and all that, sure you understand.” Sirius replied in a boring voice that he always used to answer Damien’s questions regarding the Order.

Damien looked towards his father, "Dad, are you going tell me?"

James smiled sadly at his son.

"Honestly son, it's really boring stuff, nothing interesting."

Damien huffed a little and sat back with his arms crossed at his chest. A few minutes later Damien was asked by his mum to go up to the food court on the nineteenth floor and get some refreshments. Damien got up and left, quite thankful to get away from all the boring talk that was happening.

As soon as he had left Lily cast a Silencing charm on the room and rounded on James and Sirius.

"Alright, spill. What happened last night?"

James and Sirius almost looked ashamed.

"Well, I guess there is no other way to say it but...um...we kind of underestimated the enemy." replied a very red looking Sirius.

"What do you mean 'underestimated'? Were there too many Death Eaters? How many were there?" Lily asked trying to imagine five Aurors fighting an army of fifteen or more Death Eaters. That would certainly explain the injuries.

"Um...one." replied James not quite meeting Lily's eyes.

"One" repeated Lily

"Yeah one." answered James and Sirius together.

"Okay! I don't understand how could one Death Eater fight against five Aurors and put two of them in hospital?" she asked starting to feel really annoyed.

"Three" said a small voice that surprisingly belonged to Sirius.

"Excuse me?" Lily was definitely annoyed and a little ashamed.

"Well Kingsley is here with me and James too."

“Hold on a minute, Kingsley Shacklebolt, the huge bloke who three Death Eaters weren’t able to bring down, is also injured.” Lily was staring to get really freaked out.

“What the hell happened?”

“The damn kid happened.” snapped Sirius, obviously not taking his failure well at all.

“The kid, what kid? What are you two talking about?” Lily asked, no longer able to keep up with their conversation.

Both James and Sirius explained what happened. They told her about catching Hunt in conversation with the ‘Dark Prince’ who turned out to be none other but, Lord Voldemort’s son.

Lily was looking from one to the other. They were famous for their pranks. Maybe this was just a joke to freak Lily out. Well it worked.

“Please explain this to me before I pass out from shock.” Lily said, hoping it was nothing more than a silly prank.

“I don’t know what to say. I’m kind of hoping it’s not true. But from seeing first hand what the boy is capable of, I think there’s a good chance he is *his* son. The boy was just a blur at times. He moved so fast and there was no way his moves could have been predicted.” James replied.

“And it wasn’t only wizard duelling, he was kicking our ass muggle style. Really, Lily that was the weirdest thing. The Dark Lord’s son taking muggle style fighting to tackle us.” Sirius informed an open mouthed Lily.

“And he wasn’t even intimidated in the slightest that he was being faced with five fully grown Aurors. He just wiped the floor with us.” James said with a slight red tinge in his pale cheeks.

“What...what happened to Hunt?” Lily asked already fearing the answer.

James’s face fell and a look of anger darkened his hazel eyes.

"He killed him, right in front of me. He was so powerful Lily, there was nothing I could do. He sent me flying in the air *wandlessly* and the way he dealt with Hunt, it was so cold! He just killed him, without a care in the world, no remorse, nothing!" James said. "But the really weird thing about the kid was that something about him just didn't make sense."

"What do you mean?" Lily asked James as he dropped his gaze from her. Even Sirius was leaning closer to hear this.

"Well, he just, I don't know, he just made me feel really uneasy. Like when he was fighting he didn't use any Unforgivables, just standard spells like Stupefy and Incendio. He didn't actually kill anyone except for Hunt. That just doesn't make sense. Death Eaters are all about numbers. They kill and torture as many as they can. But this kid, he just dealt with us and got to Hunt. He didn't cause any other casualties."

"He could have!" interjected Sirius with a nod towards James. "You were lucky that...that...blade, star thing he threw didn't cut you too deep, otherwise..." Sirius couldn't finish. He looked away, trying not to remember how his friend had looked when he found him in a pool of his own blood.

"It's called a Shuriken." James informed him.

"How do you know that?" Lily asked at once, surprised that James knew the name of a muggle weapon, such as the ninja stars.

"Healer Thomas told me. He's a muggle born and recognised it from my description." James told her before turning to Sirius. "I know that he tried to kill me, but see that's the thing. I don't think he really wanted to hurt me. He told me to move out of the way like three times, it was only when I attacked him that he retaliated. I mean I did give him quite a nasty cut..."

"Why on earth are you making excuses for him!" exclaimed Lily.

"He tried to kill you and you are going on about him as if he was forced to do this!" added an irritated Sirius.

James closed his mouth and bowed his head slightly, why was he making excuses. He had seen the rage quite clearly in the boy's eyes. He knew that the boy had attacked him with the intent to kill but something inside him just didn't want to believe it. Then there was the fact that the boy had seemed somewhat familiar to him. James didn't know how it was possible but he felt that he knew him from somewhere. That voice had seemed very familiar. He didn't want to admit it, but the boy's voice has reminded him of Damien. However he kept this from Lily and Sirius. He didn't want to sound crazier than he was sounding already. He sighed.

"I guess I just don't want to believe that a child can be so evil." he told them.

Lily comforted her husband and Sirius looked down at the ground deep in thought. He understood what James meant. It was not only disturbing but a little heart breaking to see such a young boy in battle and taking other's lives so mercilessly.

Before they could say anything else Damien reappeared in the room, holding lots of refreshments. He took in the sight of his mother, her arms wrapped up around his father, who was looking really defeated and his uncle Sirius also looking very upset.

"Is everything okay?" he asked as he dumped the goodies on his father's bed.

"Well it is now, that you got chocolate frogs and sherbet pops!" said his father while taking one each of his favourite candy and looking at Damien as if he were Father Christmas.

Damien sighed and ripped open a chocolate frog of his own and watched it jump up and down on his dad's bed. Honestly, he didn't think his father would ever grow up.

xxx

Harry walked steadily over to his room. His mind and body thoroughly exhausted from the lesson he had just had with Lucius Malfoy. At least he had managed to finally get to grips with the Lacerate curse. It was a very difficult hex but he had managed in the end.

Harry's room was located in a secret location of the castle that was Lord Voldemort's home. Harry had always known his self importance but had never quite given up the urge of exploring. However an incident when he was seven years old had taught Harry the hard way to keep himself a secret. So his father had an entire wing of the castle dedicated to Harry. As a child he had spent many hours exploring his surroundings and had endless adventures here.

Harry opened his door and entered his chamber. It was a huge room and had everything Harry would ever need for training, relaxing and generally anything else he wanted. He strode over to his huge wardrobe and flicked it open wandlessly. He took out a pair of casual dark blue robes to replace his dark green ones. He caught himself in the mirror and stood for a moment just looking at the reflection. He never gave his appearance a lot of heed and it was not needed since he had a natural ease of looking good no matter what. He ran a hand in his usual messy locks and pushed his bangs out of his eyes. As he did this the light caught his unusual scar and illuminated it against his forehead. Harry traced the scar slowly with his fingers. It was the only thing about his appearance that he liked. His messy black hair, sparkling green eyes and the rest of his features were of someone that he despised with all his might. His father had not allowed him to change his appearance, no matter how much Harry had begged him.

Harry tilted his head slightly and smiled as he took off his green robes. Although he was only sixteen years old he had already achieved the body of a warrior. His arms and chest were already muscled and he had worked hard to get his body to be that way. Endless hours of practise and training had resulted in a very well formed body and mind that Harry couldn't help but be a little proud of. He wasn't very tall or short. For his age he was perfect. If Harry had been at school, like all the normal boys of his age, he would have been very popular with the girls.

Harry had just dressed into his casual robes when there was a knock on his door. Harry flicked his door open wandlessly and saw Lucius Malfoy standing at his doorstep.

Harry wasn't surprised to see him. There were only two Death Eaters that could enter his wing, without giving the password and one of them was Lucius Malfoy.

"Yes?" Harry asked, wondering what he had forgotten to say as he had spent the last four hours with him.

"I just wanted to congratulate you once again. It is unheard of to be able to learn the Lacerate curse in just one session." Lucius said, with a hint of a smile.

"Most of the things I do are unheard of." Harry replied with a smirk.

Lucius couldn't help beam with pride over Harry. He had known Harry since he was brought to Lord Voldemort and over the years had developed a growing compassion for the raven haired teen. It was him that had fondly named Harry the 'Dark Prince'.

Lucius was very proud that Draco had become best friends with the Dark Lord's heir since that would ensure Draco's success in the wizarding world once it was under Lord Voldemort's control. He knew that Draco had been saved from Lord Voldemort by Harry many times, as Draco's arrogance and tendency not to follow rules had caused much embarrassment. Luckily the growing friendship the two boys shared had made life very easy for the Malfoy family and, if it was possible, they were now even more arrogant and obnoxious.

"I would like to be there when you perform this curse." Lucius said carefully.

Harry looked over at him before replying. He had gone over this many times with him.

"I told you. I like working alone." Harry said as he closed the door to his wardrobe.

"I know, and I respect your decision. It's just, I would like to see you in a duel. It would be a sight to remember." Lucius said.

Harry raised an eyebrow at him.

“Well, you can’t. Deal with it.” Harry replied, cutting the conversation short.

Lucius didn’t say anymore. He knew better than to argue with Harry.

Before he could say anymore the door behind him opened again. Thinking that it was probably Bella, as she was the only other person who could come to Harry’s room, Lucius turned around with a sneer on his face.

“I told you Harry would learn it in one session, Bella.”

His sneer slipped off his face when he saw that it was actually Lord Voldemort standing before him. Without another word, the aristocrat Malfoy fell to his knees and bowed to his Lord.

Harry looked on with a little distaste. He never found the whole, ‘obey me and behave like I am God’ thing very appealing. The mere thought that soon people will be doing that in front of him made him feel slightly nauseous.

“Leave us.” Voldemort said in his high cold voice.

At once, Lucius Malfoy rose to his feet and left the room. Harry waited until Malfoy had left before addressing his father. He was surprised to see him in his room. Usually he summoned Harry to see him.

“Is everything alright, father?” Harry asked, a tinge of worry in his voice.

Voldemort took a moment to observe the teen standing before him. The sound of Harry’s voice alone was enough to calm him down.

“Everything is fine.” He answered before walking further into the room.

Harry looked at his father. He knew something was bothering him. It wasn’t all that hard to figure it out. But Harry didn’t say anything to contradict him. He knew his father would bring up the reason for his visit sooner or later.

Sure enough, Voldemort reached into his robes and pulled out a small box. He held it in his hand for a moment before handing it to Harry.

Wordlessly, Harry opened it and stared at the sight before him. Inside the small box was a silver pendant. It was in the shape of a serpent that had two heads on either side of its intertwined body. The eyes of the serpent were a shimmering green colour that seemed to almost hypnotize you. Harry looked up at his father with a questioning look.

"This belonged to our great ancestor, Salazar Slytherin. I want you to have it." Voldemort explained, reading his heir's thoughts.

Harry was now eyeing the pendant with an awed expression. Voldemort loved it when he managed to bring out a childhood expression from Harry.

"But this pendant has another special aspect to it. This pendant has a piece of my soul in it, so I only see it fitting that you have it with you at all times."

Harry's expression changed from awe to sudden understanding. He looked down at the pendant before fixing his stare to his father's face.

"Why are you giving it to me?" Harry asked in his most controlled voice.

Voldemort kept his eyes fixed to Harry as he answered.

"I want you to always remember who you are." Was the simple answer.

Harry felt his heart leap in his chest. He knew what brought this to his father's mind. He reached into the box and took out the beautiful pendant. He slipped the chain over his head and let the pendant, his father's Horcrux, sit on his chest, next to his heart.

Without taking his eyes away from his father, Harry spoke.

"I'll always be your son." Harry said. "I don't have to be reminded of who I am. I know what you're thinking, but that's not the truth. Just

Chapter Eight

Harry walked silently through the grounds. He was heading back after a few hours of training. He knew that all the Death Eaters were inside the Manor but he still kept a hold of his mask in his hand, just in case he needed to use it.

Harry was beyond tired. He had trained for nearly five hours straight. He never usually spent that kind of time training but lately it was all he wanted to do. He knew it was the pent up frustration inside him that wanted out and this was the only way out. Well, this and going on assignments.

Harry continued walking through the woodland area that separated his training grounds from the main Manor. Just as he walked deeper into the woodland he heard it, a sound behind him. Harry didn't stop walking but he instinctively strained to hear where the sound was coming from.

His wand was safely tucked in the upholster on his arm. Harry continued walking, making it look like he didn't notice that someone was following him. He could hear the footsteps behind him clearly now.

It all happened in an instant.

With one hand Harry threw on his mask and with the same hand he reached for his wand. He turned around on the spot and blindly grabbed the person that was sneaking up on him. Harry's hand was wrapped around the person's neck before he realised who it was. Harry slammed the person into the nearest tree before aiming his wand at their throat.

He was more than surprised to see the blond boy in his grip, moaning at the pain of being slammed against a tree.

"Ow! Paranoid much, Harry?!" the boy said angrily.

Harry smirked behind his mask and released him. Harry reached over and took off his mask before pocketing his wand.

“Draco, why were you sneaking up on me?” Harry asked his childhood friend.

Draco Malfoy was rubbing the back of his head and shot Harry an angrily look.

“I wasn’t *sneaking* anywhere! I was just being quiet, that’s all.” He said.

Harry smirked in response.

“Afraid father would catch you?” Harry asked.

It was no secret the Lord Voldemort hated Draco Malfoy. He blamed him for distracting Harry from his training and his lessons.

Draco didn’t say anything but cast a wary glance around him.

“See, this is why you should come over to my house.” Draco told him.

Harry laughed in response. They started walking towards the Manor. Draco was a lot more relaxed now. If he was with Harry, then he was fine, even facing Lord Voldemort was possible if Harry was by his side. If he was alone, then there was the chance that he wouldn’t make it back home.

“So, when did you get back?” Harry asked as the trudged their way up the hill.

“I got back ages ago, but father thought it was best to stay away for a while. He said you were busy with things, so I had to sit around and get bored senseless for a few weeks.” Draco replied.

“I had assignments.” Harry answered simply.

“I wish I could go on an assignment with you.” sighed Draco.

Harry snorted and gave Draco a funny look.

“You, in battle! I would like to see that!” Harry said while silently loving the look of incredulity that appeared on his friend’s face.

"What! Why not? I am a good dueller!" he replied in a dignified voice.

"You would probably keep on asking the opponent if your hair had fallen out of place." laughed Harry as Draco threw him a dirty look.

"It's no crime to look good, but of course you wouldn't know anything about that! When was the last time you tried brushing that mop you call hair?" Draco asked while shooting Harry a half heartened glare.

Harry just shrugged and ran his hand through his hair while replying:

"Not everyone is as high maintenance as you, Draco."

Harry watched his best friend fumble around trying to find a good enough insult to throw back at him. He had gone quite red.

"Yeah, well you're a..."

"A what?" asked a high cold voice.

Draco spun around to see Lord Voldemort standing behind him. His red, merciless eyes were fixed on him. Draco fell to his knees at once as he was brought up to do.

"I hope you were not about to insult my son, were you?" Voldemort asked, dislike lacing his words.

"No, my Lord! I would never..." Draco started.

"Leave!" Voldemort ordered him.

Draco stood up and without as much as a backward glance at Harry, he made to leave. Lord Voldemort stopped the very pale and scared looking Draco and looked at him up and down with plain disgust on his face.

"Young Malfoy. I understand it that you have come home for the holidays. I want to remind you that this is *not* your home so I don't want to see you here!" He paused here to look over at Harry who was watching the entire scene with a curious look on his face. "You may

come here only when Harry wishes you to be here, otherwise stay away. Understand!”

“Y-yes M-master.” Draco managed to stutter out before hastily leaving, not even looking back to see Harry glaring at Lord Voldemort.

Once Draco had disappeared from view, Lord Voldemort turned towards the dark haired boy to see him glaring at him. Harry never disrespected his father in front of company; he always waited until they were alone to do that.

“What?” asked Lord Voldemort as Harry continued to give him an icy glare.

“I don’t treat your friends that way.” Harry said, eyes still locked with ruby red ones.

“That is because I have no friends, I have no need for them and neither do you, especially no-good cowards like that young Malfoy.”

Harry folded his arms around his chest and looked at his father.

“I don’t *need* Malfoy but it is nice to talk to someone who isn’t *decades* older than me!”

Lord Voldemort smiled at Harry’s comment and walked over to him. He placed his hands on both of Harry’s shoulders and for a moment just stood over him. Harry looked up into his father’s face and felt some of his anger fade away. ‘He always does that with one look’ thought Harry as he looked into his father’s face.

“Why do you have a problem with Draco?” asked Harry in a more hushed tone.

“I don’t have any problems with him. I just don’t think he is worthy of being in close company with you. I don’t like the disrespectful way he talks to you.”

Lord Voldemort had overheard many conversations to know the way Draco Malfoy had talked to Harry. How he teased and sometimes

even ridiculed him. It took everything Voldemort had, and Harry's intervention, to ensure that Draco Malfoy still had all limbs intact.

"Well, that's between me and Draco." Harry sighed, he was getting tired of arguing with his father. "Anyway, what are you doing out here? Is the meeting over?" Harry asked.

"Yes, it's over. I was expecting you to be back in the Manor by this time. I wanted to see where you were. Now I see why you were held back." Voldemort said, looking in the direction Draco had run off in.

"I only met him a few minutes before you came. I lost track of time in training." Harry answered.

Voldemort looked at Harry closely.

"You've been training a lot more these days." He commented.

Harry shrugged his shoulders.

"It doesn't hurt to be more prepared."

Voldemort didn't comment but walked Harry back to Riddle Manor.

xxx

It was late in the evening and most of the members of the Order wanted nothing more than to go home. Lily sat again with James on one side and Sirius on the other. James had been released a week ago now and had already resumed his post as Auror. She thanked all her Gods that James was okay. Thankfully there was no scarring, otherwise James would have had an ugly scar running from below his left ear all the way to the back of his neck, where the blade had cut him. She was brought out of her thoughts as Dumbledore stood up to start the meeting.

Albus Dumbledore took his position in front of the tired looking group of people.

"Thank you all for coming." He started. He looked at the faces sitting before him before looking at James, Sirius and Kingsley. "It's true." He stated simply. "Voldemort has an heir."

The atmosphere in the room changed almost instantly. Surprised gasps were echoed as were distressed sighs. James looked at Lily and tried to give her a small smile, to comfort her. It didn't work.

"How is this possible? How can no one know of his existence until now?" McGonagall asked.

"I don't know, Minerva but Severus has confirmed to me that the boy who killed Larry Hunt was in fact Voldemort's son. His true name is not known and so he is referred to as the Dark Prince." Dumbledore replied.

"I can't believe Voldemort managed to keep him a secret. This is just unbelievable." Tonks commented, shock written on her face.

"I believe that Voldemort kept him a secret from his own men. He was revealed to the Death Eaters only two years ago. Even now, no one has seen his face or knows his real name. Only the Death Eaters that are trusted and close to Voldemort have met with his son." Dumbledore said.

"How come Snape didn't tell us about him?!" James asked at once.

"Because, Potter, I wasn't part of the meeting when he was revealed!" Snape answered back icily.

"You must have learnt about him afterwards." Sirius added in.

"There are many rumours floating around in that place. I didn't want to say anything until I saw anything with my own eyes." Snape curtly responded.

"So he's the one who has been killing all those Death Eaters? You were right. The Dark Prince has been killing on Voldemort's orders." Arthur Weasley asked.

Dumbledore looked at Snape before answering.

“It seems that the Death Eaters found murdered in their homes had misgivings with Voldemort. It seems that Voldemort sends his son out to carry out what he likes to call ‘assignments’ and gets rid of those he feels are threatening him or are in his way.”

Lily felt a shiver run up her spine. What a way for a child to be brought up.

“Do you know what age he is? Has he come of age yet?” Molly asked.

“We can’t be certain but I think he is still under the age of seventeen. This is based on the information we have been able to gather.” Here he gave Snape another appreciative nod before continuing.

“He works alone. That is why he was never seen during a raid. He doesn’t work alongside the Death Eaters. There has only been one instance where he was with a team of Death Eaters.” Dumbledore faltered here and it took him a moment to gather his words.

“It has been revealed that the Dark Prince was with the Death Eaters when they attacked the Longbottoms.”

Lily gasped out loud as did most of the room. She looked over at the two empty seats directly in front of her. Everyone in the room was looking in that direction as well.

“The Dark Prince was the one who tortured and killed the Longbottoms. He set them and their house on fire using a magical fire that killed them slowly, allowing them to be...burnt alive.” Dumbledore stopped as he couldn’t go on.

The tension in the room had become unbearable. Suddenly every Auror had forgotten about Voldemort and his Death Eaters. They wanted the Dark Prince, to make him pay for the atrocious attack he had made on the Longbottoms. Frank had been a fellow Auror and his wife Alice had also been a member of the Order. Their deaths had affected them all and now that they knew who was directly responsible, they would do anything to bring their killer to justice.

Lily fought the sob that was threatening to overtake her as she grabbed onto James’ hand. Frank had been a good friend of James.

When Harry had gone missing fifteen years ago, Frank and Alice had been there for her and James. They were good people and did not deserve to suffer such an ill fate. The fire had taken 48 hours to put out and in the end there was nothing left of the bodies but ashes.

"I know that this news is upsetting but we have to focus on what we have before us. This is a chance. If we can apprehend the Dark Prince then we can eliminate a good part of Voldemort's confidence. With the Dark Prince under arrest, we can easily get to Voldemort." Dumbledore explained.

At this point, Kingsley stood up.

"I am sorry to say this but we have not even been able to hurt him, let alone capture him. The boy is unpredictable. He uses spells that we have never even heard of. I don't think we can plan his capture."

The atmosphere in the room was already solemn and at Kingsley's words it plunged another couple of notches down.

"Our only option is to study the boy. We can learn a lot from the way he battles." Moody said, giving his solution to the problem.

James stood up so that every eye was now on him.

"See, I think that's a problem. We don't have time on our side."

Everyone stared at James as he made this revelation.

"What do you mean 'we have no time' Potter!" snapped Snape.

Sirius growled a little at him but Lily quietened him by placing a hand on his arm.

"What I mean is simple, we have no time to study him, this boy is simply wiping the floor with us and he is not even seventeen yet. He only has the usual one third of his powers. If we don't capture him now then...well can you imagine what he will be like when he comes of age and gets his full powers?"

James' words took their effect as everyone had a look of pure terror and dread on their face.

"We need to know more information about him. We have to know what his weakness is, since everyone has at least one." Dumbledore said, as he eyed the Order's spy, Severus Snape.

Snape looked at the Headmaster and felt that this was the time to report on his findings. He stood up so that everyone had turned their attention to him.

"Well I think that everyone must realise his most obvious one, the Dark Lord." He paused to listen to the collective intake of breath. He continued. "I have found that the Dark Lord and the Dark Prince share a very close relationship. I have never seen the Dark Lord react to anyone the way he reacts to his son. Even the Dark Prince seems to be really connected to his father. He would gladly sacrifice himself if the Dark Lord asked him to."

At these words, Sirius spoke up.

"What are the chances that we can ask You-Know-Who to do just that?"

Lily looked at him sharply, honestly he had no sense at all.

"However" Snape continued after sending Sirius a glare. "I have found out that he is quite close to another one person. Bellatrix Lestrange." he looked straight into Sirius' eyes as he said the name of his cousin.

Sirius' eyes darkened and a blush crept up onto his cheeks. He and Bella had been very close when growing up but as they became young adults, Bella fell into the Black family's tradition, and took the Dark Mark. Sirius had to literally flee his home in order to save his life from his own family. James looked over at his best friend and noticed his jaw clenched and his fists in tight balls. He glared back at Snape. 'He could have worded that differently' he thought. 'Slimy git!'

Snape had a satisfied smirk on his face.

Chapter Nine

Harry was not having a good day. He had woken up to a splitting headache, thanks to some Death Eater who had delivered some unfortunate news to his father. He then had spent most of the morning looking for Bella only to be told that she had gone on a raid.

“Typical” he said under his breath.

It was getting colder now as it was approaching the middle of August. Harry pulled on the sleeves of his robes to cover his hands as he set off towards the middle of the grounds. His silver mask was sitting in the inside pocket of his robes. Most of the Death Eaters had gone to this raid, which was probably ordered by his father, after hearing whatever the disturbing news was that had awoken Harry.

Harry walked steadily on towards his training grounds. He was feeling quite aggressive after the lousy morning that he'd had and wanted to vent some of this anger away by training. However he had not even reached the training grounds when a sound alerted him. It was a slithering sound. The leaves on the ground were slightly crunching as if someone or rather *something* was sliding over them. Harry knew instinctively what this was. He turned around slowly to see a huge snake slithering towards him.

“Nagini” he hissed in Parseltongue.

“Young Master.” she hissed back at him.

Harry walked over to the huge snake and gently stroked her head. He was really fond of her. Nearly as much as Lord Voldemort himself. He had promised Harry that when he turned seventeen he would get Harry a similar snake. ‘Just one more year to go’ thought Harry as he continued to stroke Nagini. He had just turned sixteen a fortnight ago, but as usual it was not celebrated. The only birthday of Harry's that would be celebrated would be when he came of age, seventeen.

Harry looked at the giant head of the reptile and asked again in Parseltongue.

“What are you doing here? You usually don't go anywhere until nightfall.”

“I got bored so I was going to get myself a small...snack!” she hissed at him.

Harry grimaced slightly, he knew that a small snack for Nagini was usually a very big thing by normal standards. Nagini was responsible for the disappearances of most farm animals such as horses, cows, and a few sheep that were near by. She had even got herself a few humans many times, but Harry chose not to think about that right now.

Before he could say anything more to Nagini he felt a searing pain in his scar. His hand found its way to his forehead instinctively and Harry was momentarily blinded by the white hot pain that had erupted in his head. He blinked away the spots he was seeing and turned in the direction of the manor.

“Wonder what's wrong now?” he muttered to himself.

He turned to Nagini and hissed his goodbyes and set off towards the castle. The pain had gone as fast as it had come. There was the dull throbbing that Harry had gotten used to, since Lord Voldemort was very rarely in a completely happy mood. He didn't stop once, until he approached the doors leading to his father's room. He knocked once and entered the room quietly.

Lord Voldemort looked up at the person who had entered his private chambers. He saw Harry and motioned for him to come closer. Voldemort stepped away from the window and turned to look at him.

“Harry, there's been a situation, I have just received a distress signal. It seems the raid this morning hasn't gone very well.”

Harry nodded once without taking his emerald green eyes away from his father's ruby red ones.

“Who was the signal from Father?” he asked.

“Bella” Voldemort almost whispered the word.

Harry felt like the air around him had vanished. He couldn't breathe. He looked at his father awaiting orders to go and help her, but they never came.

Lord Voldemort only looked at Harry and turned away, obviously fighting the anger building inside him, for Harry's sake.

"Father, what are your orders?" Harry pushed.

"Nothing, I don't want you to do anything."

Harry could only stare at his father's turned back.

"But father, surely we have to do something..."

"Harry, as much as I want my inner circle back, especially Bella, I am not going to risk you in a rescue mission." Voldemort said, still with his back towards Harry.

Harry felt his own anger building.

"Father, we can't lose the inner circle either, it will take too long to build up again, and Bella...we can't lose her either."

Harry said the last part quietly. The mere thought of losing Bella was too much for him to even fathom. Voldemort turned around to face Harry at this. He also looked as if he was torn between trying to save his follower Bella or keeping his son out of harms way. He personally didn't care about Bella or any other Death Eater in particular, but Harry was right. If he lost his inner circle now it would cause all sorts of problems, not to mention the delay in winning the war. He sighed deeply and locked his eyes with Harry's sending him the visual location of the raid.

Harry took in the detail and turned around sharply, and almost ran to the door.

"Harry!" Lord Voldemort called out after him.

Harry stopped at the door and spun around.

“Just take her and come back immediately, Understand!”

“Yes Father.” was Harry’s reply and then he quickly made his way to the apparation point just outside the main door.

xxx

Harry apparated in front of a crumbling building. He quickly scanned the surrounding area. There was evidence of battle everywhere. He could make out the blood just at the entrance. He made his way into the abandoned building, which may have been a warehouse at some point, but now was nothing more than a crumbling wreck.

With his mask firmly in place Harry entered the building. He walked in cautiously, even though it seemed that the place was empty. He could hear voices shouting in the distance, maybe on the upper floor of the destroyed building. He kept to the shadows and quietly made his way to the stairs. Once he reached the top he saw that the battle indeed was still going on. There were bodies lying, scattered everywhere. Most of them were masked Death Eaters. Harry cursed under his breath. He quickly crossed the room and hid near the collapsed wall. His emerald eyes were searching the floor for the form of Bella. He noticed that he could hear curses being uttered and the flashes as the spells were being fired but he couldn’t actually see anyone around.

‘They must be behind the ruins’ Harry thought as he surveyed the mountains of rubble and rocks lying everywhere. Harry threw caution to the wind and moved away from his hiding area. He saw Bella instantly. She was lying in the corner of the building. Her robes were ripped and blood streaked her usually pretty face. Harry felt the anger inside him bubble. He was shaking from suppressed rage. He got up quietly and made his way to the fallen body.

He reached her without anyone realising. He knelt down beside her and gently placed a finger on her neck. ‘Please don’t be dead!’ he whispered to himself. He felt the pulse and breathed out a huge sigh of relief.

“Bella” he whispered as he tried to wake her up. Bella opened her eyes and to Harry’s surprise gave him a wide grin.

“Hey gorgeous!”

Harry whipped away from the body. The face was Bella’s but the voice was that of a man. A voice Harry had heard many times. The ‘fake’ Bella sat up and smiled at the look of shock on Harry’s face. Harry stood up, but before he could raise his wand he noticed that all the voices that had been shouting curses had now stopped and he was completely surrounded by the previously fallen bodies.

xxx

Lord Voldemort sat on his throne. He had Nagini next to him but he was ignoring her at the moment. He sat massaging his temples, eyes closed, repeating a silent mantra to calm himself down. Trying to concentrate all the anger he was feeling away from him. His concentration was broken by the sound of his door being knocked on and the sound of many voices.

With a sweep of his hand he opened his doors and sat shocked as the entire inner circle came through. They were all wearing triumphant looks and were smiling at their Dark Lord. None of them looked even remotely hurt. As they all knelt before him his gaze fell on the Death Eater nearest to him.

His only female Death Eater smiled at him as she stood up to greet him.

“Master, the raid was a complete success. We now have the...”she broke off as she noticed her master looking at her with disbelief.

“My Lord!” she gasped as Voldemort had stood up and appeared in front of her in a flash. He stood looming over her.

Voldemort stared into Bella’s eyes and realised with a sick jolt that he had been fooled. Bella had not sent out the distress signal. There had been no complications. He had sent Harry into a trap!

“No...no! Harry!” whispered Voldemort. He took a step back and then without warning he lunged forward and grabbed Bella around the arms and shook her like a rag doll

“Get him back! Get Harry back now!” he snarled at her.

Bella could only nod her head as terror gripped at her. She saw the images flash before her as Lord Voldemort entered her mind and showed her how Harry had left to allegedly ‘save her’.

She turned and wordlessly ordered the rest of the inner circle to follow her. She and Lucius led the way out of the chamber.

Lord Voldemort stood and watched, all the while channelling his anger away from him. If Harry ever needed total concentration it was now.

xxx

Harry looked around him and saw at least ten Aurors surrounding him, their wands pointing directly at him. Most of them had removed the Death Eater masks and black robes to reveal their Auror robes as Harry realised that he had been fooled by the bodies on the ground. The ‘fake’ Bella laughed a bark like laugh. Harry felt his insides burn with anger. Before his very eyes the face and body of Bella changed slowly into the tall dark Sirius Black.

Harry could only glare at him as the famous Auror shook his dark locks out of his eyes and gave Harry another wide grin.

“Well Prince, nice to see that you turned up, I thought I was going to have to dress like my dear old cousin for the rest of the day.”

He took out his wand and pointed directly at Harry’s chest.

“Now, be a good boy and put your hands where we can see them.”

Harry ignored him and instead twisted his body around to show that he was surveying the surrounding Aurors.

“Well, eleven against one. Never thought you had it in you.” he said to Sirius in a mocking voice. He saw with pleasure a few faces turn red and their wands shook slightly.

Harry smiled to himself. He was slowly making his concealed second wand move down his arm towards his hand. He was going to need it.

“So, care to explain how you did it?” Harry asked Sirius, to distract him while he non-verbally muttered the accio curse for his wand.

“How did I do what?” asked Sirius with an annoying look of triumph on his face.

Harry clenched his teeth in anger before hissing at him.

“How did you fake Bella’s distress call?”

“Oh that, well it’s a piece of cake really, when you have this.” he held up a small ring.

Harry looked at it closely and realised it was identical to the ring Bella had. Harry was confused for a moment but then, upon examining the ring again he understood what had happened.

The ring had the Black family crest on it. It was obviously given to Bella by her family. Harry knew that when a distress call was made it generally doesn’t have much detail, since it is a distress call, so the person making it doesn’t have much time to give a lot of detail. Usually the place and nature of distress is all that can be given. The identity of the caller is usually made by the registered wand or by an artefact with a distinguishing mark, such as a family crest, that the caller has with them at the time of making the call. Since Bella’s wand is not registered, as are all of the Death Eaters wands, the ring would have been used to identify the caller. His father would not have expected Sirius to have the ring nor use it in this manner, so he had assumed the distress call to belong to Bella.

“So you stole her ring. Can you stoop any lower Black?” Harry asked while enjoying the red blush creep onto the older man’s cheeks.

“Actually, I didn’t steal anything! This ring belongs to me. Being her cousin and all I got the ring as well, just didn’t have a use for it until now.” Sirius finished while glaring at the teen before him.

“And the Polyjuice potion?”

“Just happened to have some stock leftover. Glad I kept it from the last time I pretended to be her, that didn’t work out as well as this though.” Sirius now had moved a couple of steps towards Harry.

“Now that your questions are answered I think we should move onto the arrest, don’t you?”

Harry didn’t answer.

“Come now boy, don’t try anything stupid. You know you can’t take all of us!” Mad-eye Moody said while inching nearer to the boy.

Harry turned to face him and felt his hand close around the wooden stick. He smiled again behind his mask.

“Can’t I?” He mocked before whipping out the second wand.

Before anyone could react Harry pointed both wands at the ground and bellowed.

“MOMENTUM EXPUR!”

The entire ground suddenly shook as if an earthquake had hit it. The Aurors were certainly not expecting that and most of them got knocked off their feet. James, Kingsley and Sirius were the only ones who managed to stay upright, although the shaking ground had meant that they could not point their wands at the boy standing before them. They watched as the Dark Prince kept one wand on the ground sending waves of energy through the ground so that it kept shaking, while using the other wand to draw a circle around him. The wand was emitting a red beam and as the baffled Aurors watched, it cut a perfect circle in the ground. In front of their eyes the Dark Prince disappeared to the floor beneath. He had cut a hole in the ground and had made his way to the ground floor in three seconds flat!

The ground had stopped shaking and the eleven Aurors looked at each other in shock as they hastily got to their feet and jumped through the hole to the ground below. ‘How on earth did he mutter two curses at the one time, that’s impossible!’ thought James as he fell to the ground floor. He scanned the ruined building and spotted

the boy making his way towards the door. He was soon joined by the rest of his team and they started shouting curses at the boy.

Harry threw himself behind debris of crumbling plaster. He leant against it and started to take out his ninja stars. He placed his wand back in the upholder attached to his upper arm. He grabbed a hold of two stars and carefully moved so that he was in clear view of the Aurors. At once he was forced to duck back behind cover as a rain of red and yellow curses came flying his way. It had only taken a moment but Harry had seen the locations of two Aurors. He took a deep breath and flung himself away from the safety of the plaster and threw the blades in the direction of both of them. The blades hit the Aurors in the chest and the two men instantly fell to the ground, the blades embedded deep into their chests. Harry barely made it back to the shelter of the crumbling plaster while more curses rained down on him.

He heard a cry amongst the Aurors.

“Don’t do that! We need him alive, only stun him understand. Don’t kill him!”

Harry recognised the voice belonging to James Potter.

Harry heard the footsteps inching closer to him and he knew that he wasn’t going to be able to hide here for much longer. Harry’s eyes darted around him, trying to find something that would help him. He then saw a door leading out to another section of the building on his left. The door was hanging off the hinges and there seemed to be a lot of glass lying around it. Harry smirked to himself again.

Harry braced himself, he could tell the Aurors were coming closer.

“Come now, enough of these childish games. Come quietly and we promise no harm will come to you.” Kingsley Shacklebolt tried reasoning with the teen.

Harry snorted and replied loudly.

“You’re the ones *playing* games. I’m showing you how to win.”

With that said Harry spun around and darted across the room while throwing curses at the three Aurors who were standing the closest to him. Sirius and James watched as three curses left the boy's wand simultaneously and hit their mark. The three Aurors fell to the ground screaming as the acid spurt spell made their bodies erupt in horrible blisters. Harry kept on running. He could hear and feel the footsteps behind him. Harry moved to the right just in time as a stupefy spell came whizzing by him. He then turned sharply to the left as another body bind curse came flying by. Harry was now approaching the door with the shattered glass.

"ACCIO GLASS SHARDS!" Harry yelled while still running towards the door.

He instantly threw himself to the ground as the sharp glass shards flew towards him. The glass shards missed Harry and instead flew straight into the three Aurors who were running behind him.

Harry heard the screams as the three Aurors hit the ground. He rolled towards the door and just had time to throw himself into the other room before another curse came zooming towards him. It had missed Harry by a mere inch. Harry had barely time to register what this room was. He saw a set of stairs and dashed towards them. There were still four Aurors left and the ones injured would probably still pose a threat. He knew he had to get out of there as fast as possible.

He came back to the floor that he had found Sirius pretending to be Bella. He noticed an identical staircase to the one he had just climbed and began making his way towards it. He began climbing it and was nearly at the top when he felt a hand grab onto his foot, making him fall onto the hard stairs. Harry whipped his head around and saw a dark haired Auror, Kingsley Shacklebolt, pulling him down. Harry grabbed onto the stairs and twisted slightly so that he could raise his other foot. He saw the Auror point his wand at him. Harry used his free foot to smash onto the Auror's face. Harry repeatedly smashed his foot onto Kingsley's face until he felt the grip loosen and Harry wriggled away from him. Kingsley fell to the ground, blood gushing out of his broken nose. Harry made it to the top and immediately ran towards a door at the far end. He heard heavy footsteps and a lot of shouting behind him.

Harry ran through another door and found himself in what must have been the back of the building. It seemed that some time ago there was an attempt to renovate this crumbling wreck. Harry could see the abandoned scaffolding and large gaps in the floor. Harry looked behind him as he heard the Aurors approaching him. He knew that the best thing he could have done would have been to keep to the ground floor, as his only chance of escape was to go outside and past the anti apparation wards, however he was forced to come to the top and that is what he had done.

Harry heard commotion downstairs and he peered out, what would have been a window, he saw some ten masked men enter the building and start duelling fiercely with the remaining Aurors. Harry breathed a sigh of relief. The Death Eaters were here, Harry had some help now. He only had to find a safe way back downstairs. He felt another spell zoom by him and Harry ducked to save himself. He turned to see Sirius Black pointing his wand at him.

"Nowhere left to go now kid, just lower you wand." He commanded.

Harry in response gripped his wand tighter and took a step nearer to Sirius. Before Sirius could respond Harry lashed out at him, swinging his right foot straight into Sirius's abdomen. Sirius felt like a hammer had just hit him. He flew to the other side of the building and fell hard onto the ground. Sirius felt the unsteady floorboards shake a little as his weight hit them.

Sirius stood up as Harry approached him. Harry caught Sirius off guard and smashed his fist into his face. He then swerved his right foot aiming at Sirius's chest, but Sirius caught his foot with both hands and twisted it, causing the boy to lose his balance and fall to the ground. Sirius then kicked the fallen boy hard in the ribs, causing the boy to cry out. Sirius felt his heart leap in his chest. He felt strangely guilty at hurting him. He put it down to the fact that he was duelling and hurting a sixteen year old boy which was causing the guilt. For all intents and purposes, the Dark Prince was still only a child. In a moment of hesitation Harry had jumped back onto his feet.

"You'll pay for that Black!" He spat at him. He moved with incredible speed and had knocked Sirius to the ground again.

Harry stood over him pointing his wand at Sirius's forehead. Before Harry could even utter a single word he felt a stabbing pain in his ribs. He staggered away from Sirius while clasping a hand over his side. He removed his hand to find it covered in blood. He had been hit with a stinging hex. Harry quickly blinked away the pain and looked around to locate the hexer.

He found it was James standing at the entrance. He was pointing his wand at him and moved slowly towards him. Harry sighed again.

"Don't you ever learn Potter? Stay away from things you can't handle!"

"Some habits die hard." James replied not daring to take his eyes away from the boy.

"Apparently, so do you." Harry said and as quick as a flash Harry had whipped out another ninja star.

James had only just managed to side step it as it came flying out of Harry's hand. It still managed to scratch James's arm as it went flying past him. Harry saw the crimson liquid seep out of James's arm and stain the blue robes James was wearing. Harry had his wand pointing at James, but before he could attack three jets of light came speeding at Harry.

"RECTUSEMPRA" came a shout in unison and Harry found himself hurtling through the air and smash into the ground a few feet away. He turned and saw three Aurors standing with their wands pointing at him. Harry cursed under his breath.

Sirius, Moody and Kingsley stood with their wands pointing at Harry as James went to join them. Ready to curse the hell out of him if they had to. Harry stood up gingerly and turned to face his group of enemies.

"Alright do your worst." he said in a low and dangerous voice as he prepared to bring up his shield.

He deflected the four jets of light quite easily. He laughed softly at the looks of shock and disbelief on their faces. The shield that Harry had

conjured covered Harry completely. He was standing within a shimmering blue bubble. There was no way any spell would be able to touch him. Harry brought the shield down momentarily to send two jets of 'Incendio' to the stunned Aurors. What happened next, nobody had quite prepared for.

As Harry's curse hit Sirius and Moody they deflected it with their shields and the four Aurors had turned their attention to the one boy standing before them. Seeing the shield down the four Aurors unknowingly attacked at the same time. Harry tried to block the four spells of 'Rictusempra' but the intensity was too much and he was sent hurtling through the air. Harry smashed on to the far wall and landed in a heap on the crumbling floor. As Harry made contact with the shaky floor it trembled and gave way. As the four Aurors watched, transfixed in horror, the boy went smashing to the floor below him, which coincidentally didn't hold up either and Harry fell through onto the concrete floor at ground level.

The four Aurors stood still, frozen in complete horror at what they had done. James was the first one to rush down and find him buried under the rubble. He began moving the bricks and wood to find the boy. He was soon being helped by the other three Aurors as they frantically searched for him.

'Please don't be dead, oh, please don't be dead...' He thought terrified at the thought of killing a teenager by deception. He found the boy buried under a particularly heavy piece of the rubble.

"WINGARDIUM LEVIOSA" He and Sirius shouted and both of their wands lifted the debris away from the unconscious boy. James held a trembling finger at the masked boy's neck and let out a breath he didn't even know he was holding.

"He's alive!" He informed the others and saw them share a look of relief. Suddenly there was an outburst and they saw three Death Eaters shrieking and running at them.

"What have you done!" one of them bellowed. James could see the long blond hair and knew it was Lucius Malfoy under the mask.

Chapter Ten

Sirius appeared in the hallway of Number 12, Grimmauld Place. He looked around quickly. There was no one around and he quickly made his way upstairs to one of the bedrooms. Upon entering he laid the boy down on the floor and rushed to the fireplace. He threw in some floo powder and shouted.

“DUMBLEDORE’S OFFICE, HOGWARTS!” he stuck in his head and waited for the swirling to stop. Soon enough he was staring out into Professor Dumbledore’s office.

“Albus! Albus are you there?” Sirius asked urgently. He didn’t want the boy to wake up soon.

“Sirius, my boy, what is the matter?” came Dumbledore’s reply as he kneeled down to see Sirius’s head sitting in the flames.

“Albus, we got him! We captured the Dark Prince.” Sirius realised how excited his voice sounded.

“Well done my boy! Where is he now?”

“Here at the headquarters, I need you to come quickly, along with the nurse, if possible.” Sirius cowered slightly at the look in Dumbledore’s eyes.

“How badly hurt is he?” Dumbledore asked now without even a hint of twinkle in his eyes.

“Um...I...I don’t know. He’s going to need medical attention that’s all I know.” Sirius finished feeling really guilty now.

“I will be there with Madame Pomfrey as soon as possible.”

Sirius pulled his head out of the fire and waited until the spinning had stopped. He looked over to the boy and was surprised to see Moody and Kingsley in the room as well.

“Hey guys I didn’t even hear you come in. Where is James and the rest?”

“At the Ministry, they had to accompany the fallen Death Eaters” came Moody’s reply but he was not taking his eyes off the still unconscious boy on the floor.

“Dumbledore will be here soon.” Sirius said as Moody approached the boy. Sirius watched as Moody bent low over the boy and checked his pulse.

“It’s weak but he’s still breathing.” he informed the room. He then moved behind the boy and suddenly wrenched the boy’s arms around his back and began magically binding them. A pain filled cry was heard from the boy in his still semi-conscious state. Sirius was suddenly on his feet.

“Wait! Alastor what are you doing?” he asked as he rounded on Moody who was still busy checking the tightness of the bonds, oblivious to the boy’s cry and harsh breathing.

“Making sure that the brat can’t run away or wandlessly blast us.”

Moody was now reaching into the boy’s robes and began taking out the weapons hidden within them. Sirius watched in awe as the multiple ninja stars and weapons were piled away by Moody.

Sirius noticed that the boy had now come around and was watching his weapons being taken from him. He instinctively tried to stop Moody but then realised that he was quite unable to move. He tried wrenching his arms out of the bonds but instead let out another cry as his broken arm and wrists objected strongly to being tied up. Sirius watched with a heavy heart as the boy began to panic and his green eyes, still behind the silver mask, darted around trying to focus on where he was. Then his eyes met his own and Sirius felt his heart break as he saw the pain in them.

Moody however was not showing an ounce of sympathy. He walked around and picked up the small pile of weapons and without warning viciously kicked the boy in his ribs. The boy gasped in pain. He curled up in order to relieve the pain in his already broken ribs.

“Moody! That’s enough! There is no need for that.” Sirius grabbed Moody as he prepared to deliver another kick to the fallen boy, and pulled him away.

“No need, Eh! Oh I think there is. This...this little piece of shit is the reason Alice and Frank aren’t here...! This is the monster that burnt them to a cinder! He is the reason for our injured comrades...I am going to kill him!”

Moody was struggling against Sirius’s hold and managed to get away from him. He swept over to the boy and grabbed him by his hair and roughly pulled him to his feet. Sirius saw the boy’s eyes flicker with pain. Moody tugged hard and brought his face close to the boy’s.

“I am going to make you pay boy, if it’s the last thing I do.” he growled.

Sirius looked over to Kingsley to see if he was sharing Moody’s pleasure of torturing the boy. Kingsley was standing with an expressionless look on his face. The dried blood from his broken nose was crusted on his face and robes, it was not bothering him in the slightest that Moody was hurting a child that was already in so much pain.

Sirius prayed silently that Dumbledore would come quickly. He was the only one who could control Moody. Sirius took another step towards him.

“Moody, really! Do you think this is right? I mean, we’ve got him. He will pay for all of his crimes. You don’t have to do this.” He tried talking calmly to Moody since shouting at him didn’t work.

Moody rounded on Sirius, letting go of the boy’s hair causing the boy to fall to the floor in a crumpled heap.

“Right? Nothing about this is right! Was it right for the Longbottoms to be killed in there own home? Was it right for Neville Longbottom to be orphaned at such an early age? Was it right for James to nearly lose his life? Huh answer me!”

At the mention of James, Sirius felt rage and anger suddenly erupt inside him. He remembered how he had felt when he arrived at the

fallen body of his best friend. He remembered fearing for James's life when he saw the deep gash in his neck and all that blood around him. James had lost so much blood. He could have died.

Sirius suddenly, blinded by rage walked over to the boy who was now being held up by Kingsley, as it was apparent that he could not stay on his feet on his own. Sirius ran his fingers into the boy's raven coloured hair and wrenched his head back, ignoring the pained gasp that escaped the boy's lips.

"I think it's time we saw your pretty face, don't you?" he said in a low voice.

The boy's eyes widened with horror and he tried to wriggle out of Sirius's grasp.

"N-no!" he managed to choke out.

Sirius laughed and released him. The boy tried to get as far away from Sirius as he could but Kingsley pushed him back.

Sirius put a hand over the boy's silver mask and ripped it off in one go. The reaction that followed was one that Sirius would never forget.

Sirius gasped and stepped away from the boy. Kingsley managed to keep a firm grip on him but felt himself go weak at the sight of the Dark Prince. Moody just stood there with his mouth open in shock.

Sirius looked up into the face that reminded him of someone that was closer to him than his own brother. He looked into the emerald green eyes that he could now tell, without that horrid mask, were identical to Lily's. He looked at the boy who stood glaring at him, his hair, his face. He was an exact carbon copy of James with the exception of Lily's eyes. Sirius didn't need anything else to prove who this boy was, standing before him. It was James and Lily's son, his own godson.

"Harry?" he choked out.

Harry didn't respond. He continued glaring at Sirius, while trying not to give in to the pain that was racking his body.

“Harry? You...you are...Harry Potter!” Sirius said while taking a step toward his godson.

At hearing his full name being spoken Harry reared his head up and managed to say in a low voice.

“My name...is Harry Marvolo!”

Sirius looked as if the sky had fallen on him. He quickly stepped up to the boy and grabbed him by the shoulders. Harry winced painfully but didn't let another gasp leave his lips.

“No! You are Harry Potter! You are James and Lily's son. Harry Potter!” Sirius informed him, naively thinking that the truth must have been kept from him.

Harry shrugged Sirius away from himself, ignoring the shooting pain in his arm and glared back at him.

“No! I am Harry Marvolo, Son of Lord Voldemort.”

“Harry please...” Sirius was cut off as a burst of green flames announced the arrival of someone. ‘Oh Merlin, please don't let it be James, please not just yet!’ wished Sirius. He spun around to see a very baffled and shocked looking Dumbledore and Madame Pomfrey standing at the fireplace.

Sirius spun around to look at Harry and was shocked to see the anger and hate in his eyes as he glared at Dumbledore. Harry was still breathing heavily and Sirius was sure that if Kingsley let go Harry would not be able to stand. Nevertheless it didn't stop Harry giving a murderous glare at Albus Dumbledore.

Dumbledore on the other hand was looking at Harry with an incredulous look in his blue eyes. Sirius could see that Dumbledore had been shocked to his core and was finding it difficult to speak.

Sirius didn't know what to do. He looked on helplessly as Harry continued to glare at Dumbledore. Moody spoke up.

"Albus, I don't think that this is possible. It must be a trap." he was looking at Harry with a cautious look as if expecting him to jump out of his skin as someone else. Sirius however stepped closer to Dumbledore and Moody.

"He is Harry Potter, my instincts can't be wrong about this!" Sirius argued.

"Release him." said Dumbledore quietly, tearing his eyes away from Harry to look at Moody.

"What?" Moody was confused. It even took Sirius a moment to realise that Dumbledore was referring to the bonds that were placed on Harry.

"Oh...Right." Moody grumbled and flicked his wand and mumbled the counter curse releasing Harry.

Harry instantly brought his injured arm to his chest protectively and groaned at the pain that was shooting through him. At hearing the groan of pain Kingsley let go of him and Harry fell to the ground, unable to stand by himself. At once Sirius and Dumbledore rushed to Harry and tried to help him up. Harry however looked at them furiously and backed away from them as much as his injured body allowed him. Dumbledore looked at the child he had believed was the 'chosen one'. He still couldn't believe it. Harry Potter was alive! It was nothing short of a miracle.

Harry was taking short rapid breaths, as if he was having trouble breathing. He brought his good hand to his side gingerly as his broken ribs were actually sticking out of his skin. He felt very faint. His head was pounding and he felt very sick. He tried to fight the blackness that was slowly engulfing him. Sirius and Dumbledore were still trying to approach Harry and convince him that they were trying to help.

"Harry, its okay. We want to help you." Dumbledore tried.

"I'm so sorry Harry, I didn't know...please Harry, let me help you." Sirius tried once more to help Harry up and stopped short when he violently backed away from him. At once Harry gasped and bit his lip

to stop himself screaming in pain as his movements jolted his broken and bruised body.

Sirius and Dumbledore backed away from Harry, not wanting to inflict any more pain. Sirius turned to Kingsley who was looking very pale and was compassionately staring at the injured boy sprawled on the floor.

“Kingsley, go to the office, stop James from coming here. Just tell him anything! Make sure he just doesn’t come here!” Sirius instructed Kingsley who seemed glad to get away from the awkward situation.

“Alastor, keep the Ministry away from here. We need to sort out a couple of things before they interfere and want to take over.” Dumbledore told Moody, who began complaining how impossible it was going to be to keep the Ministry away.

No one noticed a very pale Madame Pomfrey approaching Harry and gently supporting the boy, who surprisingly allowed the nurse to help him, to the bed nearby and gently lay him down. She brushed away his bangs from his eyes and smiled embarrassingly at him.

“It’s going to be okay Harry. I’ll take care of you” she whispered softly as Harry gave in to the blackness that finally engulfed him.

xxx

Madame Pomfrey ushered Dumbledore and Moody out of the room and told Sirius to block the fireplace in that room so that she could not be interrupted. Sirius did so and left immediately to join Dumbledore and Moody in the main dining room.

Sirius watched numbly as Dumbledore repeated his instruction to Moody to go to the Ministry and buy them some time. Moody grumbled under his breath, how futile this would be and stumped frustratingly out the door.

They both sat with their heads hung down, deep in thought. Sirius desperately asked.

“Albus, what are we going to do now?”

“What do you mean?”

Sirius tried not to reach over and shake the old fool.

“What do I mean? I mean what are we going to *do* now? We can’t just hand Harry over to the Ministry. They will order the Dementors Kiss without trial! We can’t hide him forever! Not that he would willingly stay with us, and we sure as hell can’t send him back to that monster Voldemort!”

Dumbledore gave Sirius a stunned look, that was the first time Sirius had said Voldemort’s name without stuttering. He gave the smallest of sighs and tried to smile at his ex-student.

“Sirius, my boy. Please calm down. We just need to speak to Harry. The poor boy has been misled by Voldemort. Once he learns the truth about who he is I am sure that he will help us in sorting out this whole mess.”

If Dumbledore thought that this would have calmed Sirius down then he was greatly mistaken. Sirius erupted and leapt up so fast his chair went flying behind him.

“Help us! Harry willing to help us! Merlin, Albus. Did you not see the way he was reacting to us? Especially towards you! He was not misled by Voldemort, he knows who he is, he knew that James was his real father, but he still attacked him. He attacked James and left him to die! Albus, Harry is not going to help us or himself for that matter. He hates us and will try to escape back to Voldemort regardless of what truths we tell him.”

Sirius was breathing very hard and his hands were shaking with fury. Why couldn’t Dumbledore understand that they were screwed? This meant that James and Lily were going to lose their son all over again. Sirius couldn’t keep the tears of frustration and heartbreak at bay any longer. He sunk to the floor and covered his face in his hands. Dumbledore came over to him and placed a hand on his shoulder and tried to comfort him.

"My dear boy, I understand your dilemma. James and Lily are going to find this very difficult to deal with, but I promise you that I will not allow them to lose Harry again."

Sirius looked up at Dumbledore with tearstained eyes.

"How?" he croaked out.

Dumbledore gave him another small smile.

"You probably didn't notice, but when Poppy laid Harry down on the bed she pushed his hair away from his forehead and I saw something that will probably save Harry."

"What...what did you see?" Sirius almost whispered to him, still sitting on the ground.

"He has been marked by Voldemort."

Sirius gasped and looked positively horror stricken.

"He...he...he marked Harry with the...Dark Mark?" he asked with a shaky breath.

"No. He has marked him in another way." Dumbledore looked straight into Sirius's eyes and recited part of the prophecy that the entire Order had learned by heart.

"*The Dark Lord will mark him as his equal*" he said slowly and let the understanding sink in. Sirius looked at Dumbledore with a confused expression.

"You see Sirius, *Harry* is the *chosen one*, not Neville Longbottom. After all, that is why he was taken fifteen years ago. Voldemort did not kill him like we all thought. He was smarter than that. He instead decided to use the chosen one. He has brought Harry up like a son and in return got Harry to love him like a father. Harry does not realise that the love Voldemort shows him is in fact a survival technique, since Harry now can not even think of hurting Voldemort. He has corrupted the innocence that Harry had, turned him into a ruthless killer so that we would not give him a chance of redemption.

You see, Voldemort had made a good plan, Harry is a very powerful Wizard and Voldemort has been using that power to finish off his enemies, but he also was making sure that if Harry was ever caught, then the Light side would annihilate their saviour by their very own hands. Tell me Sirius, if this boy was anyone other than Harry, what fate would he have suffered by now? You would not have given him a second thought as you tossed him in front of the Dementors. It just so happens that he is the son of your best friend, your own godson that has kept Harry alive until now.” Dumbledore paused to let his explanation sink in.

Sirius was looking a little sick but had managed to keep up with Dumbledore.

“Sirius, I believe it was fate that brought Harry directly into your hands. He could have been captured by any other Auror and it would have been too late for anyone to save him. If Harry has fallen into our hands, it must be because we can help him. I know that this is not going to be easy, Harry is going to be very difficult to get through to, but I truly believe that it can be done.”

“What about the Ministry, Fudge doesn’t believe the prophecy, he never has.” Sirius said in a defeated voice.

“Leave Fudge to me. I am sure that the Minister and I will come to some sort of agreement.”

Sirius looked a little doubtful. He knew that the Minister would probably use the capture of the Dark Prince to boost his popularity as the recent attacks were dragging him down lately. Before he could open his mouth to argue this point the door to the dining room opened and a very pale and exhausted looking Madame Pomfrey came in.

Sirius and Dumbledore quickly rose to their feet and helped Madame Pomfrey into a chair. She gave them a thankful look and collapsed onto the chair.

“How is he Poppy?” asked Dumbledore gently.

“Well, he will survive. He had some very nasty injuries. His right arm and wrist were broken and so was his left ankle. His back was very badly bruised. He’s lucky he didn’t break his spine. He also had two broken ribs and a cracked one. That was why he had difficulty breathing properly. I have mended all his broken bones and administered some pain relief potion. I have left some more potions in the room that he has to take, they are to help bring the bruising down and for the pain.”

Sirius looked positively horrified now. What would have happened if Harry had not survived that awful fall? Sirius tried not to shudder at the thought of removing that silver mask from a dead body in the rumble.

“Honestly though, what were you thinking, attacking him like that! He fell from two floors down! You are so lucky he didn’t die!” she said rounding on Sirius. She was looking livid and reminded Sirius of Professor McGonagall.

“It wasn’t on purpose...wait...how did you know that?”

Poppy looked at him for a moment, apprehension, evident on her face, before answering.

“He told me.”

Sirius was speechless for a moment.

“What! He told you? Why would he do that? Why did he speak to you and no one else?”

Poppy looked a little uncomfortable and then decided to just tell the truth.

“Because...because I know him.”

“WHAT!” exploded Sirius.

“You...You know him! How do you know him?” Sirius was instinctively reaching for his wand when Dumbledore stopped him.

“Poppy, please explain this.” he looked really tired and wary now.

“Well, Professor Dumbledore. Do you remember approximately six months ago there was an attack on my home? My husband Paul and I had been in the garden at the time and were helplessly left to watch our two children die in our burning house. The Death Eaters had put us in full body binds and had set our house on fire, screaming at me that I deserved this since I was a nurse who helped muggle born children at Hogwarts. When the Death Eaters left there was no one around to help us. Even our godforsaken neighbours had been terrified of helping us for fear of the Death Eaters. Then out of nowhere, this young boy arrived and just rushed into our burning home. He saved Jenna and David from burning to death and also released Paul and me from the spell binding us. He asked me what had happened and I told him about the Death Eaters. I still remember the rage in his green eyes. He told me not to worry and that the Death Eaters would never harm us again. Before he left I asked him who he was and he just smiled at me and told me that he was called Harry. I never saw him again, until today.” she finished with tears in her eyes.

Sirius was speechless. Harry had *saved* two little children from dying. But why? Harry had saved them from people on his own side. Harry risked his life at the age of fifteen for two small children of his enemies.

“Poppy, did you see his face clearly, I mean it was definitely Harry, he wasn’t wearing any mask to cover his face was he?” Sirius asked cautiously.

“No. He was not wearing any sort of mask. He was wearing wizard robes but no mask. His face was clear for all to see.”

“But then why didn’t you tell anyone that you had seen someone who looked exactly like James!” Sirius nearly shouted at her.

Poppy looked at Sirius and then replied calmly.

“Because Mr Black, I have never to this day seen Mr Potter, so that would have been quite a connection for me to make.”

Chapter Eleven

Sirius paced in his room. Dumbledore had left to meet the Minister to discuss Harry. Sirius was left alone while Madame Pomfrey stayed in the same room as Harry, in case he woke up.

Sirius was panicking. How the hell was he supposed to tell James about Harry? Why did it have to be Sirius who told James? Sirius had been there the night Harry had been taken by Peter. He remembered James recovering in hospital and how James had fought against the depression that the loss of Harry had brought to him. Sirius doubted that James had ever gotten over Harry as it was plain to see that James showered the love, which would have been for Harry on Damien. Sirius sighed again, what would Damien think of this? He didn't even know that he had a brother who had supposedly been murdered at the age of fifteen months. And what about Lily! Only a fortnight ago she had locked herself in her room for the entire day, as it was the day of Harry's sixteenth birthday. Damien and James had been away from home the entire day as Damien would get suspicious of the absence of Lily around the house. Lily spent that day looking at photographs of Harry and imagining what her life would have been like with her sixteen year old son.

Sirius sighed and ran his hand roughly through his hair. It was cruel to show Lily and James their son and then to abruptly snatch him back again. Sirius wasn't sure how safe Harry was with them. Fudge could come anytime and take him away. Or Voldemort could come to 'rescue Harry'. Sirius gave a hollow laugh at the irony of the situation. A long lost son being 'rescued' from his own parents by the enemy.

Sirius collapsed on his bed and tried to get his racing mind to relax. He couldn't afford to get upset just yet. He had to be cool and collected for, James and Lily's sake. They were going to need his support now, more than ever.

Suddenly a sound downstairs caused Sirius to bolt upright in bed. Someone had come to the headquarters. Was it James? Or was it someone uninvited? Sirius shook his dark head. 'Get a grip Sirius' he scolded himself. After all this was the headquarters of the Order. He gripped his wand nonetheless and made his way downstairs quietly.

He was relieved to see Remus Lupin standing in the kitchen looking around for someone.

“Oh Remus, thank Merlin you’re here!” Sirius quickly made his way over to his friend and could have hugged Remus for the relief he brought.

“Why? What’s the matter?” Remus was looking at the uncharacteristic look of worry and sadness on his childhood friend’s face.

Sirius wasted no time and launched into his story about the capture of the Dark Prince and whom it turned out to be. Remus turned paler and felt his legs shake. He sat down at the kitchen table and let his head drop into his hands. He looked back up as Sirius finished his story.

“...and now Dumbledore has gone to see Fudge, Poppy is upstairs with him and I’m supposed to tell James!” Sirius finished helplessly.

“Tell me what?” came a voice from behind them and the two friends whipped around to see a very angry looking James standing in the doorway.

“Tell me what Padfoot?” James repeated taking a step toward them. Sirius felt the blood drain from his face. ‘Oh crap, why was James in such a foul mood, did he find out already?’ Sirius tried to push down the feeling of panic, as he looked at his best friend and tried to speak in a calm voice.

“James! I...I didn’t hear you come in.” he said, while trying not to stammer.

James looked at Sirius and Remus’s pale faces. He knew something was wrong.

“Padfoot, Moony what’s the matter, you look really freaked out.” James came into the kitchen and sat in a chair facing his friends.

“Oh... nothing just tired, what happened to you? You look really annoyed.” Sirius didn’t think distracting him was going to work, but he

really needed to calm James down before dropping the bombshell of truth on James.

An annoyed look of anger flashed in James's eyes again

"That...that Kingsley, I mean honestly he couldn't pick a worse time to annoy me! I mean I just got back from the raid and all he wanted was the damn paperwork completed. He demanded that all the paperwork for each Death Eater captured was completed before I left the office. Can you believe that?"

Sirius growled a little. He had asked Kingsley to keep James away from the headquarters but he didn't think Kingsley would anger James in the process. 'Idiot' thought Sirius.

"So, anyway I've been dying to get back! What happened? Where is he? Did you find anything out yet?" James was watching the reaction of his best friends carefully. With each question they seem to pale even more and diverted their eyes away from him.

"Um...yeah, he...he's upstairs and um...James I need...need to explain something ...to ...to you." Sirius cursed himself mentally for stammering so much.

James looked at Sirius with a confused expression.

"Padfoot, what's wrong? The boy is okay isn't he? I mean we didn't do too much damage, right?" James was thinking that maybe they had killed the boy, which is why his two friends were looking so glum. Even if the boy was a Death Eater, killing a sixteen year old wasn't easy on your conscience.

"He broke quite a few bones and he's pretty badly bruised, but he's going to be fine. Madame Pomfrey is with him right now" Sirius answered glumly.

James cursed under his breath. He didn't like having that on his conscience either.

“Well I better go and have a word with him then.” James slowly rose out of his chair but stopped as his two friends jumped up and grabbed him before he even got to his feet properly.

“NO! James, just let him be for now!”

“James, he’s not in any fit state to talk yet.”

“What the hell is going on? Since when do we care if Death Eaters are fit enough to interrogate?” James eyed Sirius suspiciously.

Sirius and Remus shared a look and let go of James at the same time.

“Okay Prongs, there is something that we need to tell you.” Sirius sat down followed by Remus and James.

“Sirius! Remus! What’s going on? You both are really starting to freak me out.”

Sirius took a deep breath and looked over at Remus who nodded and placed a hand on Sirius’s arm.

“James, I am going to tell you something that is going to come as a bit of a shock, but just try to remain calm and...and remember that everything will work out in the end.”

Sirius watched as James clenched his teeth, ‘never a good sign’ thought Sirius.

“Sirius, I’m warning you, just tell me what the hell is going on!”

“It’s the boy, the Dark Prince. We know who he is. He’s not from a Dark Wizard family, he...he belongs to a Light family.” Sirius hoped James would catch on and hopefully save himself from saying the words out loud. However, this was not to be.

“Who is he?” James asked in a low voice, obviously intrigued.

Sirius shared a look with Remus and then looked straight into James’s hazel eyes.

“It’s Harry.”

James watched as Sirius said the words but thought he must have misunderstood. Sirius couldn't have meant *his* Harry. That was not possible. It must be some other Harry.

"Which Harry, Harry who?" he asked trying to fight the panic that was rising within him. Sirius looked at James with sympathy in his eyes.

"James, it's *our* Harry."

James just sat there and tried to digest what had just been said. Before James could open his mouth to question Sirius, there was a cry heard from upstairs. The three men jumped to their feet, wands drawn, and ran to the source of the noise.

The cry was heard again along with another voice trying to calm someone down. James was the first one to rush through the door, followed closely by Remus and Sirius. The sight they saw made them halt at the door. James saw a young messy haired boy lying on a bed; both hands hiding his face and was crying out in agonising pain.

Madame Pomfrey was trying to pull the boy's hands away to see what was causing him so much pain. She looked up at the three men as they burst through the door. She locked her eyes with James and she looked a little startled. She quickly got over her reaction and spoke directly to James.

"Could you give me a hand here?" she had to raise her voice since the boy's screams were getting louder.

James hesitated for a second but strode over quickly and looked down at the raven haired teenager lying before him. The boy's hands covered his face as he gripped his forehead and continued to moan.

Poppy looked at James and said:

"See if you can get him to lower his hands, I need to see what the problem is."

James took another look at the boy and carefully took the boy's wrists in his hands. He could see they were bandaged and he didn't want to exert too much pressure on them. As gently as James could he

prised the boy's hands away from his face. The boy was struggling and didn't want to let go of his forehead but James managed to get his hands away. The boy seemed to be semi-conscious.

James' breath caught in his chest. The face that was revealed was exactly as his own younger self. The boy's eyes were squeezed shut in obvious pain, so James couldn't see the emerald eyes that were exactly like his wife Lily's. James took in the boy's features and felt his legs go weak. His heart was thumping so hard he felt it was going to bruise his chest.

"Harry?" he managed to whisper.

His son, Harry, didn't hear him. He was in too much pain. His head felt like it was going to split open. He had tried to hold in the cries of pain but it was no use. His father, Voldemort had never been so angry before. 'He must have found out about my capture' Harry's mind tried to tell him.

James watched in horror as his son continued to thrash around in pain and he still had his eyes tightly shut. He saw Harry biting his lip to hold in his cries and James felt his heart break.

"Harry! Harry what is happening to you?" James heard Madame Pomfrey say. James was just about to tell her off for asking such a stupid question, when to his shock Harry answered.

"My...My scar...hurts!" he said in a hushed voice. It seemed that all the screaming had made his throat hoarse. Harry still hadn't opened his eyes and did not notice James holding onto him.

Madame Pomfrey pushed Harry's bangs out of the way and saw the scar, just above his left eye. James looked at the lightning bolt shaped scar on Harry's forehead and felt rage build inside him. Madame Pomfrey placed her hand gently over the scar and heard Harry hiss in pain. James wanted to yell at her to stop but he knew that she was a professional in medicine and probably knew what she was doing.

"You're burning up." she told Harry as she fumbled around in her potions bag. She brought up two small vials. She gently lifted Harry's

head and made him drink the two vials. Harry did so without resisting, not that he could, since his arms were being restrained. After a moment or two Harry seemed to relax and drifted off to sleep.

“What was happening to him?” James asked as he entered the kitchen with Poppy and the other two men.

“Well, I’m not entirely sure. I think that what he has is a curse scar, they are very rare but are known to act up from time to time.”

Poppy answered him while conjuring up some tea for everyone. She desperately needed some.

“What had caused it to start hurting?” asked Sirius.

“I don’t know, he was sleeping quite soundly and then all of a sudden he grabbed his forehead and started screaming.” explained Poppy.

James was still sitting in his chair holding his cup of tea with no intentions of drinking it. His head was spinning and he couldn’t get the image of Harry thrashing around in pain out of his head. He didn’t even hear Poppy go back upstairs. Sirius came and sat next to him. He took the untouched cup of tea out of James’s hand and looked at him.

“You okay mate?” he asked while trying to steady his own heart.

James lifted his head and looked at his friend. He shook his head sadly.

“No I’m not okay.” he looked around and Remus was now sitting in the chair on his other side. James was glad he had been blessed with such good friends. They never left his side, regardless of what the situation was.

“What do I do now? What do I tell everyone? My own son is our enemy The Dark Prince is actually my flesh and blood! And Lily, how do I tell her. And what about Damien! Oh Merlin this is a damn nightmare.”

James let his head drop into his hands and furiously tried to bite back the tears that were bursting to come out. 'Lily would not be able to take this.' he thought to himself.

"Prongs you should tell both of them before they find out from someone else." Remus said in a small voice.

James lifted his head and looked at Remus.

"How? What do I say? This is something that Lily and I have always dreamt about, a miracle that brings back our son but I had never imagined it to ever be like this." James made no attempt to hide the tears that were now flowing freely down his cheeks.

Sirius was at a loss at what to do. He had only seen James cry once and that was when Harry was taken away. Sirius tried to comfort his friend but found that James just pushed him away. Remus also tried to comfort his broken friend.

"Prongs, he is still your son, that innocent Harry that we all loved and cared about is still alive. He's just been forced to grow up differently and really quickly that's all." Remus said.

James sat with his head hung low. He was trying to make up his mind as to how to tell his wife about Harry.

He decided that it was going to be done tonight.

xxx

Harry awoke feeling as if every bone in his body was on fire. He looked around and started to panic as his surroundings were unfamiliar. It took him a moment or two to remember what had happened and how he had ended up here. His insides began to burn at the anger of being captured. He tried to get up but realised that he could barely lift his head before his body erupted in shooting pains, forcing him to lie back down again. He moaned softly and felt his voice crack as his throat felt like sandpaper.

Madame Pomfrey heard Harry moaning and rushed to his side.

“Harry, oh good you’re up.” she came by his side and started lifting different vials of potions.

“How are you feeling now? Probably still sore after that dreadful incident.”

Harry watched her quietly, amused how she would ask a question and then answer it herself.

“Where am I?” Harry managed to croak out.

“Don’t worry Harry, you’re safe.”

“I need to get back home.” Harry tried once again to get up, but lay back down quickly as the pain erupted in his back.

“Just lie back down.” Poppy laid a gentle hand on Harry before he tried to get up again.

Harry gave up his futile attempt to get up and instead gave in to Poppy’s fussing. He looked around the room. It was very bare with nothing more than the four-poster bed that he was currently lying on, a two door wardrobe in the far corner, a small desk and chair and a small sofa next to the fireplace. He asked once more.

“Where am I Poppy?”

“You are currently with Sirius Black in his home.” Poppy replied trying not to meet Harry’s eyes.

Harry felt the anger bubble in him once more.

“I need to get away from here, please Poppy, you have to let me go.”

Harry tried pleading with her since he knew he was in no fit state to do anything else.

“I am sorry Harry, but you cannot travel anywhere yet. Just try and rest and then we can speak about this later, Okay.”

Harry nodded his head and tried to close his eyes and sleep but the anger was still burning within him. He was in an enemy's house, at their mercy.

'This is not good!' he thought as he fell into an uneasy sleep.

XXX

Lord Voldemort sat on his throne, but looked very different than he usually did. His body was not held high but was crouched low. His head was hung and he seemed to be in a deep mantra. Bella stood not too far away with silent tears running down her cheeks. She kept on repeating to herself under her breath 'please let him be okay, please, please don't let them harm my Harry, please'.

Lord Voldemort lifted his head and looked directly at the Death Eaters in his chamber. He eyed Bella and Lucius angrily and then instantly repeated his mantra to calm himself down. It had taken a good twenty minutes to calm himself down. He didn't want to let his anger hurt Harry again. Merlin knows what kind of state he was in. He had lost his temper when Lucius had told him that the Order had hurt Harry gravely. Injured his son! Lord Voldemort had never felt such rage.

He spoke to both Death Eaters, who stood glumly in front of their master.

“You know what I want, you know what to do. Do not show your miserable faces to me until it is done!” Lord Voldemort ordered them with quiet venom.

“Yes Master.” came the reply in unison.

Lord Voldemort stood and left for his private chambers. He would not lose Harry, not now. Whatever the cost, Harry had to be back with him and he had to be back soon.

[illegible]

Chapter Twelve

James sat holding hands with Lily, watching her try to digest the truth. Lily had sat in complete silence as James had told her everything that had happened that day.

Damien had been floored to the Burrow and told that he was to spend the rest of the summer there with the Weasleys. Damien would normally have been ecstatic at this news, since he always complained that he was bored during the summer and that he should spend most of it with the Weasleys. However Damien could tell that he was being sent to the Burrow because something was wrong. He had tried to ask his tired and very crabby dad what was wrong but just got told that he was expected at the Burrow that very night so he had to leave immediately.

Lily was glad that James had sent Damien to the Burrow. She could not have dealt with him asking awkward questions at this moment. Lily had tried not to let the news that her son, Harry, was alive overwhelm her but soon found that she was fighting a losing battle. Harry was alive! Her son, who she had spent every waking moment remembering, was actually alive and she would be able to see him, touch him and hear his voice once more.

Lily felt her prayers had finally been answered and thanked Merlin for this day. Lily was not even letting herself deal with the issue of *who* her son had become. The Dark Prince!

Lily sat holding hands with an exhausted looking James who had tears in his eyes and was looking down at the ground while finishing his story.

"I want to see him." Lily whispered to him after he had finished.

"Lily, We can go and see him tomorr..."

"No! James I want to see him now!"

"Lily, Hun, he won't be awake right now and he...well he won't talk to us." James said the last part with a heavy heart.

“How do you know that? Maybe he has calmed down now! I don't care James I want to see my son.” Lily had tears streaming down her flushed cheeks but her voice was steady and strong.

James gave in and nodded his head in agreement. Both parents got up and made their way to the headquarters of the Order.

Madame Pomfrey was exhausted. She had finally managed to get the injured teen into a comfortable position. She was just about to tuck herself in on the sofa in the room, when she heard muffled voices downstairs.

“Honestly, you would think they would have the sense to keep quiet, the poor boy has only just gone to sleep.” she muttered to herself.

She got up and walked hurriedly to the door and pulled it opened as quietly as she could. She had only taken one step out of the door when she was confronted with a very red eyed and angry looking Lily Potter, followed by James Potter. Poppy was good friends with Lily since they both worked for Hogwarts.

Poppy looked at Lily with sympathy. She didn't even want to imagine what the poor woman was going through right now. To be given back your son after fifteen odd years and under such distressing circumstances. Lily didn't even have to open her mouth, Poppy just put a hand on her shoulder and stepped aside.

“Just try not to wake him. He only just managed to go to sleep.”

Lily forced a small smile then nodded and gave Poppy a thankful look.

Lily opened the door quietly and stepped in. She looked at the sleeping teen on the four poster bed. Her breath seemed to hitch up in her chest. Lily took small tentative steps toward the sleeping form of Harry. She had imagined thousands of times what Harry would have looked like if it wasn't for that fateful night. She had always come to the conclusion that Harry would have been very similar to James. As a child Harry had James' messy black hair, his cute nose and his lips. Never could she have imagined that Harry would be the spitting image of James.

James had come in the room as well but was still standing at the door. He watched with tears in his eyes as his wife stood over their son. Lily had longed for this moment, had dreamt of it for almost fifteen years. James wished that the circumstances had been different so that they could take their son home. James still hadn't heard from Dumbledore after his meeting with the Minister and that had to mean bad news for Harry.

Lily watched how slow and peaceful Harry's breathing was. She greedily took in his face, his features, his messy hair, the way his chest rose and fell with the rhythm of his breathing. He looked so peaceful and deep in sleep that Lily couldn't have awakened him, even if she had wanted to. She sunk to the floor whilst keeping her green emerald eyes on her son.

"Harry, oh my, Harry." she silently wept while still gazing at him. Images of Harry as a baby flashed through her mind as she cried. Harry, when he just born, Harry at the age of three months, Harry when he first started crawling, Harry at the age of nine months when he first said 'Dada' and 'Mama', Harry on his First birthday party surrounded by everyone that loved him, Harry at the age of fifteen months when he was cruelly taken away from his parents and his home.

James walked over and helped his wife up from the floor and held her tight in his strong arms, whispering comforting words in her ear.

The two parents stood in the room silently crying over the discovery of their son, crying over the joy that seeing him alive had brought. But they also cried at what the possible future would bring. They both sat silently next to the bed. They were so unsure of the future, but they were determined that they were not going to waste the present. James and Lily spent that entire night just watching their son sleep.

xxx

Harry awoke suddenly and it took him a couple of minutes to determine what had awakened him. He heard the clatter of dishes in the distance and the sweet smell of breakfast wafting to him. It was coming from downstairs. Harry looked around to find that Poppy was nowhere to be seen.

“She must have left in the night.” he murmured to himself.

Harry closed his eyes again and took a deep breath. He felt a lot better than he had felt last night. He slowly opened his eyes and pushed himself off the bed. His feet touched the floor and Harry carefully pulled himself onto his feet. His ankle still hurt but he knew that it would take a few days of drinking ‘muscle replenishing potion’ along with other potions, to bring down the bruising, before it would be back to normal. This wasn’t the first time he had broken anything. His back ached as he tried to stand straight but Harry ignored it. He knew that most of the members of the Order were probably away or having breakfast so now was the best time to slip away.

He painfully made his way to the door and slipped it open. After looking in both directions, and seeing no one around, Harry quickly made his way to the stairs. Harry was feeling the pain in his back worsen with each step but he ignored it. Harry put his foot gingerly on the first step and strained his ears to hear if anyone was around. He couldn’t hear anything to suggest that he had company. He couldn’t give up now. His ankle throbbed painfully as Harry put his weight on it. He reached the landing and took a cautious look around. He could hear some voices coming from a room on his right but the door was firmly closed, so he was safe. The landing was deserted. Harry quietly made his way painfully to the front door.

‘This is too easy.’ he thought as he neared the main door. Why was no one watching over him and why were there no guards placed here at the front door?

‘Maybe it’s because they don’t expect me to walk out the main door.’ he thought to himself.

Harry was now only inches away from the front door. He stopped and listened for any sounds alerting him to any possible approaching footsteps. Harry let out a ragged breath and made to open the door.

However, his hand had barely reached the silver door knob when an invisible force slammed into Harry and the already injured teen was thrown violently back. He slammed into the opposite wall and crumbled onto the hard floor. Harry let out an anguished moan as he landed on his already aching back. He lay there for a moment, taking

small harsh breaths, so as not to aggravate the pain in his ribs. Before Harry had a chance to get up he heard a voice just beside him.

"I should have warned you about that."

Harry looked up and found a very bemused looking Dumbledore and a few Aurors, standing a few paces away from him. Harry growled a little, Albus Dumbledore was the last person Harry had wanted to see right now, especially in Harry's current state. Harry bit his lip to stop himself crying out in pain, as he turned around onto his hands and knees.

Dumbledore watched as the injured teen tried to stand up and all the while glare at him. He watched as Harry winced and put a hand gingerly to his side. Dumbledore wanted nothing more than to go over and help him, but he knew what the outcome would be. Instead he stood silently and waited for Harry to find his feet. Only once Harry had stood up completely, and was now holding his head high, did Dumbledore speak again.

"This entire house has some very powerful wards in place Harry, only a member of the Order can come and go as they please, everyone else has to be escorted." He finished as the glare coming towards him was so strong Dumbledore was sure it had to hurt.

"Come Harry, let's go and sit down as I am sure you must still be recovering from yesterday." Dumbledore said with a little guilt in his voice. He did not approve of Sirius's plan to trick the boy and he certainly didn't think very highly of four spells on one boy.

"I'm not going anywhere with you!" Harry spat at him. His voice was still rough from his dry throat.

Dumbledore looked at Harry sadly. It hurt the age old wizard, how much hatred was directed towards him. Dumbledore opened his mouth to try and calm the angry teen down, but before Dumbledore could say anything Harry walked slowly towards the foot of the stairs and began climbing them.

"Harry, don't you think we should talk about the circumstances that have arisen?" Dumbledore asked gently.

Harry turned his head around and glared at the headmaster.

“I have nothing to say to you and I don’t want to hear any rubbish from you either!”

At once the three Aurors standing behind Dumbledore raised their wands at Harry. Harry looked taken aback for an instant. The look of fury on the Aurors faces was unnerving. Moody, Kingsley and Arthur had never heard anyone speak to Albus Dumbledore in that manner. Dumbledore however raised his hand and motioned to the Aurors to lower their wands. Dumbledore had expected this from Harry. Harry at once turned and left without another word and slammed the door to his room.

Dumbledore returned to the dining room, with the three Aurors following, his head bent low, caught in thoughts of how he was going to get through to the angry teen.

Harry had no choice but to return to his bed. He gingerly sat on the end of the bed and let out a deep sigh. He was in trouble now. Any time now the Ministry would come and make his arrest. He would probably be in Azkaban by tonight! He had to get out of here, but how? He was not ready to face the wards again. He didn’t think he would be able to get back up again. He was brought out of his thoughts by someone knocking and entering his room. Harry opened his mouth to hurl abuse but stopped when he saw Poppy enter, looking a bit tired. Harry managed a weak smile when he saw her shriek and come running towards him.

“Harry! What in the name of Merlin are you doing up? Lie back down this instant!”

She pushed Harry under the covers and started fussing over him.

She checked over him and once she was done, listing all the injuries that were still worrying her, she sat back on her chair, looking exhausted.

Harry sat up in bed and smiled at her.

“Finished are we?” He asked

“Yes” came a weary answer.

“Good. Now tell me how am I going to get out of here?”

Poppy looked over at Harry with sad eyes.

“Harry, please, you know you can’t leave.”

“Poppy, you don’t understand. I can’t stay here. It’s not safe for me. If I don’t leave now, by tonight I will be in Azkaban.” Harry stopped so that his words took effect.

Poppy looked really uncomfortable, she was wringing her hands and kept shooting worried looks at Harry and then at the door. Finally she got up and walked over to him.

“Harry, if it were up to me then I would help you. I owe it to you. But the fact of the matter is that even I can’t help you leave. I’m not a member of the Order yet so I can’t escort you out.”

She looked at the sad face of the injured teen and felt her heart break. She knew that Dumbledore didn’t want Harry to come to any harm but did Dumbledore have the authority to save him from Azkaban? She would rather not think about it at the moment. Instead she pushed the bangs away from his forehead and smiled sadly at him.

“I am truly sorry, Harry.”

Harry merely shrugged at her and stared at his hands in his lap. He would have to come up with a different plan.

xxx

Dumbledore sat with the members of the Order around him. Most of them had been eagerly awaiting his return to find out the fate of Harry. All Dumbledore could tell them at this point in time was that the Minister would get back to him regarding Harry’s fate. Tonks and Molly were still trying to clear away the breakfast dishes, while Arthur was busy talking with James, Sirius and Remus. Dumbledore sat speaking gently to Lily who still had red, puffy eyes and seem to be

now sitting in a daze. Moody and Kingsley were sitting in one corner, apparently lost in their own thoughts.

Lily looked around her as Dumbledore left her side to speak to Molly. She sat thinking hard about what Dumbledore had said to her. He was trying to reassure her that Harry would come to no harm. As long as Harry learnt the truth about whom he is and who Voldemort is, then Harry would surely come back to the Light side. Lily didn't particularly care about this right now. Her main focus was to go upstairs and see her son. She had been practically dragged from the room by James so that she could rest. She slowly got up and started preparing a plate of breakfast. James saw this and stood up to come next to her.

"Lils, I don't think he..."

"Don't, James. Please just don't." Lily said in an emotional voice.

James stopped talking and instead put a reassuring arm around Lily's waist. He gave her an understanding smile and reached over to pour some pumpkin juice in a glass for Harry.

Both parents headed out of the door while everyone else in the room sat quietly, not really knowing how to react. Moody growled a little and then went back to his quiet thinking. Everyone else decided to ignore the 'breakfast in bed' situation and went back to what they were doing.

James and Lily made their way quietly up the stairs. Both were nervous to speak to Harry. They stopped outside his door and gave each other a nervous look. They pushed the door open, but stopped, as both their hearts had just missed a beat. They saw Harry sitting up in bed talking to Poppy.

"What's in this one?" Harry was saying as he held up a small vial containing a black coloured potion.

"Wings of dragonflies, crushed beetle legs and..." Poppy started.

"Okay, don't tell me."

“Then why do you ask?”

“Just curious.”

Harry gave Poppy a cheeky smile as he downed the black coloured potion in one gulp. He gave a dramatic shudder.

“Eugh, I hope you realise how awful that was.” he said looking at Poppy.

Lily and James couldn't help but smile. This was the first time that Lily had heard her son's voice. She was momentarily taken back at how similar it was to Damien's voice. James had of course heard Harry's voice before but it was always in a confrontational tone. This was the first time he heard Harry speak in a somewhat normal tone.

James and Lily had opened the door and had now stepped into the room. Poppy and Harry both turned to see who had joined them. Poppy gave both, James and Lily a bright smile, but Harry's expression darkened and after glaring at both James and Lily he looked away from them.

Poppy noticed Harry's reaction and quickly excused herself, saying that she had to rush downstairs for a moment. Harry didn't even look at Poppy, as she hastily left the room. James and Lily were both feeling immensely uneasy. Harry didn't even look at them. He continued to gaze at his own hands which were lying in his lap. Lily took a brave step and allowed her shaky legs to carry her over to the bed. James followed her reluctantly.

Lily put the plate of food on the bedside table and looked longingly at Harry. The raven haired boy didn't even spare her a glance. Now that Lily could see Harry's eyes she felt her heart swell with happiness. 'He definitely has my eyes!' she thought to herself. James had joined Lily at this point and placed the glass of juice next to the plate of breakfast.

Lily couldn't hold herself back any longer. She reached over and tried to touch Harry's face. Harry flinched away from her and threw her such a dirty look that it made Lily take a step back.

“Harry! What’s the...” Lily was cut off as Harry ripped the bed cover away and pulled himself out of bed. He stood and glared at Lily and James.

“Harry, please lie down you’re not completely healed just yet. You’ll hurt yourself.” James tried.

“Quite disappointed aren’t you?” Harry said and Lily was visibly shaken at hearing the venom in Harry’s voice.

James looked at his son in shock.

“What do you mean?”

“Didn’t really expect for me to survive did you!” Harry exclaimed and this time Harry had a strange gleam in his emerald green eyes. It looked almost as if there was some hurt mixed in with the rage that was burning in his green orbs.

James and Lily both were stunned by Harry’s accusation.

“Harry, how can you say that? You know what happened was an accident, I would never have attacked you if I had known that you were my...”

James faltered here. He still couldn’t bring himself to say that Harry, the Dark Prince, responsible for so many deaths and torture, was his son. Harry was now staring at James with so much loathing that Lily had to look away from her son.

“Just understand this Potter! I am not you son. Your son died many years ago. I am Lord Voldemort’s son.”

Lily and James were speechless. They had expected Harry to be rude and difficult to speak to but they had not prepared for such hurtful words. Lily and James both took a tentative step nearer the furious boy.

This time Lily tried to speak to him.

“Harry, please listen to us. I know that you must be really angry and confused right now but you must understand. We are your parents. V-Voldemort isn’t your father.” Lily tried desperately.

Harry turned his icy glare towards Lily and spoke directly to her.

“You may not think so, but in all essence he is my true father. He is the one who brought me up. Just by bringing someone into this world does not make them a parent.”

Harry smirked inwardly as he saw the tears appear in James and Lily’s eyes. It felt good to show them their place. Without saying another word to either of them, Harry made his way painfully over to the en-suite. He slammed the door closed to the bathroom and sunk to the floor. He didn’t really need to use the bathroom. He just wanted to get away from the Potters.

Lily and James sadly made their way out of the room and down the stairs. They went into one of the rooms and tried to comfort one another in a vain attempt to mend their broken hearts.

xxx

Moody watched as Dumbledore engaged in a conversation with Arthur and Kingsley. His magical eye had whizzed to the back of his head and saw the Potters reach the bottom of the stairs and go into the room adjacent to the kitchen with miserable looks. He knew that Harry was now alone as Madame Pomfrey was also busy giving instructions to Remus and Sirius on what potions Harry was to continue taking. Moody got up and left the room discreetly.

He had arrived outside Harry’s room in a matter of seconds. Moody knew what he had to do and he was prepared to go to any length to succeed. He opened the door and stepped inside, locking the door behind him.

Harry snapped his head up to see Moody stomp into his room. For a moment Harry had thought it was the Potters again. Harry threw Moody another glare and went back to staring out the window. He was currently sitting up in his bed. He ignored Moody until he sensed

the Auror standing over him. Harry sighed and tore his gaze away from the window.

“What!” Harry snapped at Moody.

Moody didn't respond. He was staring at Harry as if restraining himself from strangling the boy sitting before him. Instead of speaking to Harry, Moody reached into his robes and brought out two items. One was his wand and the other was a small vial. Harry eyed the wand apprehensively before turning his gaze to the small vial of potion. He looked disbelievingly at Moody and asked him.

“You really expect me to drink that willingly?” Harry mocked Moody, knowing full well that he shouldn't anger the crazy Auror.

“You can drink it willingly or I can force you!” spat Moody, barely able to keep his hands steady from suppressed rage.

Harry felt the anger inside him reach boiling point. He once again, climbed out of his comfortable bed and stood face to face with Moody.

“Think you're a great powerful Auror because you can exert force on an injured teenager. You had to tie me down before you even tried to hurt me, so excuse me for not being remotely afraid of a coward.”

Harry kept his voice down, even though he wanted nothing more than to scream abuse at this Auror. Moody was shaking now with anger. He leaned forward so that his face was barely inches away from Harry's.

“You'd better be careful with that mouth of yours boy. I'm not like Dumbledore. I'm not going to let you speak to me in that tone. You may be James's son but to me that makes no difference. You're a bloody heartless murderer and that is how I am going to treat you!”

The words had barely left Moody's mouth when Moody reached over, and in a flash, he grabbed Harry around the neck. Harry gasped and at once tried to free himself. He turned around so that he was facing away from Moody and elbowed him in the stomach. Moody gasped as the air was forced out of him. He loosened his grip on Harry and the raven haired boy twisted away from him. Once free Harry turned

around and focused all his attention towards Moody. The Auror stood up, still gasping for air and saw Harry make a swift hand gesture, Moody felt an invisible force slam into him and he was lifted off his feet. Moody was thrown across the room.

Moody was now positively pissed. He got up and pointed his wand at the boy.

“REDUCTO” He bellowed and at once a jet of light left Moody’s wand and hit Harry straight in the chest.

Harry felt himself fly across the room and land painfully on the desk in the far corner of the room. Before Harry could blink away the red spots in front of his eyes he felt Moody’s hand grip around his throat again and Harry was forced over to the bed and thrown onto it violently. Harry felt bonds across his wrists and ankles at once, as he was restrained. Harry looked over at Moody with fury. He couldn’t blast Moody or protect himself without the use of his hands. He watched helplessly as Moody came nearer to him and opened the vial.

Harry didn’t even have to guess what he was going to be forced to drink. Vertiserum, the truth potion. Harry found himself breaking into a cold sweat. He knew what questions were going to be asked. His father’s location and the inner circle members’ identities. Harry tried to wrench himself free from the bonds holding him but was unsuccessful.

Moody approached Harry and grabbed the teenager’s chin roughly as he prepared to spill three drops into his mouth. Harry clenched his jaw tight. There was no way he was going to let Moody give him that potion.

“You will drink this boy and you will spill all your nasty secrets about Voldemort!” Moody hissed at Harry.

Moody tried to wrench open the boy’s mouth but was finding it difficult with only one free hand. In his frustration he backhanded the stubborn boy and tried again to force the boy’s mouth open.

Harry felt tears stinging his eyes as he recovered from the slap. Harry's jaw was hurting and felt like it was on fire. His face burned at the spot where Moody had slapped him. However Harry still refused to open his mouth. He was trying to get away from Moody as much as he could. Just before Harry's body gave in and his mouth relaxed slightly the door to Harry's room burst open and a furious looking Sirius came striding in. Sirius took one look at Harry and Moody and in an instant Sirius was pulling Moody away from Harry. The Veritaserum was still clutched in Moody's hand. Harry could have cried with relief. He watched as Sirius dragged Moody away from Harry all the while screaming at him.

"How dare you Moody! What in the name of Merlin did you think you were doing? Get out from here! Get out!"

Harry saw Moody fighting back until he spotted James and Dumbledore come into the room. Dumbledore took one look at the state of the room and with a flick of his hand he released Harry from his restraints. Harry quickly sat up in bed and tried to get his thumping heart to calm down. Dumbledore motioned for Moody, Sirius and James to follow him. As they left the room James approached Harry and looked at the raven haired boy, eyes full of concern.

"Harry, are you okay?"

Harry realised that he was shaking. He quickly wrapped his arms around his own shoulders and took a deep breath to stop the shaking. He looked away from James and flinched away from James's outstretched hand. James looked at his son compassionately and headed out the door closing it softly behind him.

Harry collapsed onto his front and covered his face furiously into the pillows. He had never been so angry in his life. Never before had anyone dared to touch him like that. His father had never let anyone hurt him, not even in the slightest. Harry turned over and lay on his back. He tried to steady his breathing and calm his thumping heart. The truth was that he had never been so scared before. Not scared of being harmed. Physical pain had always been a part of his life, no it was fear of what would have happened if Harry had been forced to

drink the truth potion. All of his fathers secrets, his plans, his location everything would have been exposed.

‘No, I can’t allow that to happen. My father must not be jeopardised.’ He thought to himself.

His head was thumping and the pain from his ribs and ankle was making Harry feel sick. He rolled over onto his side and let his worried mind drift off to sleep. His last coherent thought was ‘I’m not going to let them slip me Vertiserum’.

xxx

James was furious with Moody. He rounded on him in the dining room.

“What the hell Moody! Why did you treat him like that for?” he bellowed at the Auror.

Dumbledore was also looking at Moody through very angry eyes. Moody however did not notice this.

“I treated him how he deserves to be treated! He has done atrocious things and I am sorry James if you feel he can be excused because he’s your long lost son, but the rest of us have to do what’s right!”

At this the room quietened down instantly. James was eyeing Moody murderously and behind him Sirius and Remus were also looking shell shocked at Moody’s remark. Lily looked away from them trying futilely to hide her tears.

“Moody, I have never said he should be excused, you have no right to accuse me of that. I was friends with Frank as well! I mourn his death too, but that doesn’t mean you have to lose control like that.”

Moody merely grunted at this and started towards the door.

“I’m not the one who has lost any control. You are the ones who are letting a *murderer* roam around the entire headquarters as if he owns the place!” With that said Moody left the room and headed out the front door.

James and Lily were stunned. A murderer, Harry was a murderer. The entire truth about their son hadn't quite registered with the distraught parents. Harry had no hope in this world. He was going to go to Azkaban. Lily had completely dissolved and was now sobbing hard while Molly and Remus tried to comfort her. James was still left standing at the spot. He was looking at the door with a defeated look on his face. Sirius and Dumbledore managed to pull him and make him sit on a chair.

Molly, Arthur, Kingsley and Tonks got up quickly and took their leave, wanting to give the family some privacy. Everyone knew that Sirius and Remus were a part of the Potter family. Once they were gone Dumbledore spoke up.

"James, Lily, please try not to give up hope. I know this is an extremely difficult time for you but you have to keep strong, for Harry's sake."

Sirius looked at Dumbledore. This wasn't right. He shouldn't be giving them false hope. It was clear what was going to happen. The Ministry were going to come for Harry, and even Dumbledore wouldn't be able to protect him.

"Dumbledore, what possible hope can we have? The Ministry won't leave Harry, you know that as well as everyone else." Sirius said in a defeated voice.

Dumbledore simply smiled at them which made the four depressed adults stare at him in annoyance.

"My dear, Sirius, there is always hope for without hope there is nothing. I know you all may think of me as foolish but I do believe Harry will be safe from the Ministry."

James lifted his head and looked directly at Dumbledore. Curiosity overtook him and he asked the question everyone wanted to know

"Dumbledore, what became of your meeting with Fudge? Why have they not come for Harry yet?"

Dumbledore's face broke into a tired smile.

“Well the outcome is still to be determined. The Minister is considering some things. He has had reports on how Harry battles, his powers, the unknown spells and the strength the boy possesses. All of this indicates that Harry is special. You all are aware of how the Minister feels about the prophecy. Harry may not be the ‘chosen one’ in his eyes but he has to admit that Harry is a very powerful wizard with exceptional talents. It is clear that whichever side Harry will be on will have a great advantage in this war.”

Sirius spoke up at this.

“About that Dumbledore, any ideas why Harry can do all those things especially at his age.”

Sirius was of course referring to the strength Harry had shown when he sent most fully grown Aurors flying across the room by a simple kick. Sirius ran a hand across his still bruised ribs.

“Well I have one theory. You see Harry is a direct descendant of Godric Gryffindor. That would make him more powerful than most his age. However, with Voldemort...” the room gasped at the mention of his name, “...marking him as his own heir he has made Harry the last descendant of Salazar Slytherin.”

James and Lily sat horrified at this. Their son was the heir to Slytherin.

“Harry is now the heir to two ancestral lines. At the age of sixteen he has strengths and skills that match most grown ups. He has powers that will become legendary when he comes of age. How he uses those powers will depend on whether Harry will accept the truths that await him.”

He looked directly at Lily and saw the tears flowing freely again.

“Look the Minister will be foolish to just throw Harry into Azkaban. Fudge wants to win this war. He has suffered immensely at the hands of Voldemort. He wants to bring him down and if Harry can help then the Minister will not let that opportunity pass by.” Dumbledore finished looking at the sad faces around him.

“When do you find out what the Minister has decided?” James asked in a shaky voice.

“Soon James, until then try and relax. Get Harry to open up anyway you can. It is imperative Harry realises that we are not the enemy.”

“Hmmpf! Well Moody gave us quite a helping hand there!” Sirius whispered as Dumbledore got up and made his way out of the room.

XX

Chapter Thirteen

James turned around to see who had entered the dining room. He saw Lily appear holding yet another plate of untouched food. James sighed.

“Still no luck?” he asked in a defeated voice. Lily just shook her head and set the plate on the table.

It had been three days since Harry had come to the headquarters, and since then he had not touched any food or drink. Lily and James would take his three meals of the day to his room and come back with the food untouched. Harry had not spoken to anyone after the disastrous incident with Moody. Harry had confined himself to his room and refused to speak to anyone.

“James, it can’t go on like this. It’s been three days and he has not had as much as a single drop of water! He’s going to get ill and he’s not in great health to begin with.” Lily was getting hysterical. She had just spent the last 45 minutes trying to get Harry to eat something.

At first Harry used to respond with ‘Leave me alone!’ or ‘Get out!’ but lately he just ignored everyone and just sat on the stone floor of his room. Lily had noticed the dark circles under Harry’s eyes and the look of exhaustion on his face but couldn’t convince Harry to come over to the bed and lie down.

James looked over at her wearily.

“What do you want me to do Lily? Do you want me to go upstairs and force feed him? Do you think that’s what we should do?” James didn’t want to snap at Lily but he knew that the situation with Harry was getting out of control.

When Harry had first rejected his food, James had disregarded the situation by saying ‘he will eat when he gets hungry’. However it was three days later and Harry was not showing any signs of defeat and James was getting increasingly worried.

“Don’t snap at me James! This isn’t the time to turn on each other. We have to solve this problem together.” Lily answered him hotly.

James let out another sigh and got out of his chair. He walked over to Lily and wrapped his arms around her.

“Sorry Lils, but I am just at a loss as what to do about Harry. The Minister still hasn’t got any word back to Dumbledore, the Death Eaters are causing havoc trying to find Harry and we have a suicidal teen upstairs who just won’t listen to anything we have to say.” he finished and both parents sat on the couch and were lost in their thoughts.

Just then a very worried looking Sirius came into the room. He looked over at James and seem to pale.

“Padfoot, what’s wrong?” James had instantly sat up at the look of worry on his friends face. Sirius walked over at James and sat down, still looking really upset.

“Nothing Prongs, just tired, I guess.” Sirius looked determinedly at the ground as he spoke. James was at once suspicious. Sirius never admitted he was tired, never.

“Padfoot, something’s up, tell me.”

Sirius sighed loudly and turned to face his two friends.

“Okay, but promise you both won’t like freak out and make the situation worse.” he looked at James and Lily seriously. They both looked on the verge of arguing but then nodded their heads anxiously. Sirius continued.

“Alright, I went in to see Harry after Lily left. I just wanted to see if I could talk some sense into him. However, I kind of noticed that he looked really ill, I mean he could hardly keep his eyes open and he wouldn’t respond to anything I said. Not even a ‘get out’. So I used the Gondume charm, just to make sure he was healing well and that there wasn’t any damage that we were unaware of.” he paused here unsure of whether he should continue.

“What happened? What did you find?” Lily asked in a hushed tone.

Sirius looked at them both and replied sadly.

“He’s not been taking any of the potions that we have been giving him. There is no trace of any pain relief or muscle replenish in his system and...well he seems to be sleep deprived. It seems he hasn’t slept since the first night he was brought here.” Sirius finished awkwardly.

James sat with his fists clenched and the look of fury that was in his eyes made Sirius regret instantly the decision of telling him. Lily gasped and was sitting with her hand over her mouth. She has suspected Harry to be having sleepless nights but did not think for a second that he was deliberately depriving himself of sleep for the last three days.

Without warning James leapt off the couch and made his way over to the store cupboard. He yanked it open and pulled out various bottles. He finally found the one he was looking for and furiously made his way to the door. Sirius and Lily were both on their feet and were blocking the exit.

“James! Where are you going? What are you going to do?” Lily asked while blocking his way.

“Something I should have done long before now.” James hissed back at her. He tried to go around her but found Sirius blocking him.

“Prongs, just relax, mate you promised you were not going to go all psycho.”

James just pushed Sirius roughly.

“Out of the way Padfoot, I’ve had enough! Who does he think he is, torturing himself like that? I’m going to put a stop to this right now!”

With that said James managed to get out of the door and raced his way to the top of the stairs. He rushed to Harry’s room and slammed the door open.

Harry snapped his head up and looked at the blurry image of James. He had been trying to jerk himself awake for awhile now and his eyes were watering with the effort of staying awake. He was, once again sitting on the floor with his back to the wall, but not touching it. He had on purposely kept himself in an uncomfortable position, since he

found staying awake was now impossible in a comfortable position. Every night he had brought himself, painstakingly to the ground and fought hard against the sleep that was desperate to take over him.

Harry was convinced that no sooner would he be asleep that Moody would force the Vertiserum into him. Harry knew that the truth potion would work even if he had been unconscious. He had managed not to eat or drink anything, including the potions given to him, for fear of been drugged by the truth potion. He was determined not to give up any information, regarding his father. No matter what the outcome was.

Harry watched as James stormed over to him and roughly yanked him up by his arm. Harry winced at the strong grasp on his upper arm and felt himself leave the floor as James lifted him off the floor and dragged him over to the bed. James violently threw him onto the bed and held up the small purple potion that Harry recognised as the Dreamless Sleeping Potion.

“Drink!” he commanded to the exhausted boy.

Harry slowly shook his head. James lost the last of his patience. James forcefully pushed Harry to lie flat on the bed. Harry struggled to be free but was overpowered by James. James flicked the potion open and was about to pour it into the teen’s mouth when Harry suddenly brought up his hand and knocked the bottle out of his hand. James looked on in fury as the bottle toppled over and the contents spilled over the bed. Lily and Sirius had come through the door at this point and watched the entire scene unfold.

James pulled Harry into a sitting position, holding him by the collar of his robes. He shouted at Harry in frustration.

“What is the matter with you! Do you have a death wish? Why are you so determined to hurt yourself?” he shouted.

James let go of Harry and raised a hand to rake through his own hair, as he did when he was extremely angry or nervous. Harry closed his eyes in reflex and flinched away from him, obviously thinking that James had raised his hand in order to hit him.

James stopped in mid action. He saw Harry flinch away from him. 'He thinks I'm going to hit him!' he thought in horror. James' insides jolted at the thought. Even Lily and Sirius saw Harry's reaction and felt their hearts plummet into their stomachs. James slowly lowered his hand and felt all the anger leave him as he looked closely at his son.

Harry's eyes had dark circles around them. His lips were dry and chapped, since he had not allowed a single drop of water to pass by them. He was very pale and looked on the verge of collapsing. His breathing was harsh and he had a hand on his side, clutching his ribs.

James' look softened as he took in the terrible state of his son. He spoke calmly to Harry now, determined to show Harry that he honestly didn't mean any harm.

"Harry, please, you need to understand. If you don't eat or drink anything, especially these potions you will fall very ill." James lowered his voice and spoke softly to Harry, but the teen just ignored him.

"If you think that you can blackmail us into letting you go, then you are mistaken. You can starve yourself all you like. I'm not going to send you back to that monster!"

At hearing his father being called a monster, Harry looked directly at him and gave him a death glare. Harry spoke to James in a dry and hoarse voice.

"That's not what I'm doing."

"What?" asked James, confused with Harry's response.

"Blackmailing you, I know you don't care what happens to me." Harry said quietly.

James opened his mouth to argue but was cut off as Lily rushed over to the bed.

"Harry, that's not true! We do care about you, all of us do!" she said as she stood beside James.

Harry lifted his gaze and looked at her with tired eyes. He didn't believe her, it was apparent with the look he was giving to all of them. James tried a different approach.

"If you are not blackmailing us then what are you doing? Why are you making yourself suffer?"

Just then they heard a shout from downstairs.

"Potter! Black! Come down here, we need a word."

Moody's voice echoed into the room and James saw Harry tense up at once. Harry's eyes darted to the door and his hands clenched into fists. Harry seemed to be shivering slightly and didn't take his eyes away from the door. James was momentarily confused with Harry's reaction. James knew that Harry was not afraid of Moody, but Harry's reaction to Moody's voice alone was causing the teen distress.

"Harry, what's the...." James stopped.

Suddenly it all made sense. Harry's last encounter with Moody, Moody trying to force Vertiserum into Harry, Harry not eating or drinking anything, not even the potions given by Lily. His refusal to sleep, tensing like that at Moody's voice. Harry was afraid that Moody was going to drug him! He was afraid to sleep in case Moody drugged him, was afraid to eat or drink anything, especially potions, in case they were spiked with the truth potion.

'Oh Merlin, what has Moody done to you' James thought to himself as anger coursed through him at the memory of Moody's behaviour with Harry. James breathed out slowly to calm his temper before speaking.

"Harry, are you afraid that someone will spike your food or drink?" James saw Harry slowly look over at him.

James saw the answer in Harry's exhausted eyes. James took a deep breath.

"Harry, why would you think we would allow anyone to put anything harmful into your food? You should trust us, we are your parents. We are not going to allow anyone to hurt you."

Harry gave another mistrusting look at both James and Lily. James decided that he needed to show Harry some proof, so that their son could trust them, even if it was just a little. James removed his wand from his robes and at once saw Harry's body tense at the sight. Even Lily was eying James warningly. James ignored both of them and pointed at the door and spoke in a clear voice.

"ACCIO VERITASERUM PONDLEY!" at once seven bottles of Veritaserum appeared through the door and landed on the bed that Harry and James were sitting on.

Harry looked confused. He backed away a little, unsure of what James was going to do with all these bottles. They heard a gruff cry from downstairs and Moody's voice thundered. 'What is going on here? What just flew out of my pocket?'

James then pointed his wand at the bottles and muttered another curse.

"REDUCTO"

The bottles smashed and the liquid drained the bed covers. Harry looked at James with surprise written clearly on his face. James did a drying spell to dry the wet covers.

"There Harry, now there is not a single drop of Veritaserum anywhere in this house. You can go to sleep completely at ease. There will also be no Veritaserum in anything you eat or drink, including potions. If you want I can do an 'Ingreto' spell on your food so that it shouts out all the ingredients that are in them. That way you can have complete peace of mind." James looked at Harry and almost smiled at the look of surprise on Harry's handsome face.

"Sleep now Harry, you are never going to heal properly if you don't sleep. I will bring up another vial of sleeping potion to help you."

James watched as Harry slid down onto the bed. James turned around and pointed his wand again at the door.

“ACCIO SLEEPING DRAUGHT” the purple potion zoomed into James’s outstretched hand. He turned around to give the potion to Harry but found that the exhausted teen was already fast asleep.

xxx

Things improved slightly after that day. Harry was making a good recovery, now that he was drinking all his potions and eating small meals in the day. He still didn’t eat as much as James or Lily had wanted but it was better than before. Harry still didn’t talk much to anyone and stayed in his room. However Sirius had pointed out the library in the Black Manor and Harry had at once raced to it.

Harry had decided that if he was going to be forced to stay here than he would keep up to date with his reading and studies. James and Lily were so much happier at Harry’s behaviour, even though Harry was still as bitter to them as before.

It had been exactly seven days, since Harry had arrived at the headquarters that the first Order meeting was to commence. Dumbledore had finally got the Minister’s final decision on Harry’s future and it was to be revealed to the entire Order that night.

James and Lily were worried sick, what was going to happen? What fate would Harry have to face? Was there any hope for him?

On top of this they were feeling immensely guilty about ignoring Damien. They had only once popped their head in the fire at the Burrow to see if Damien was okay. Damien had been having a good time with the Weasleys’ but was still suspicious about his long summer with them. Damien had tried talking to Mr and Mrs Weasley about what was going on but they had been as helpful as James and Lily.

James paced the floor as Sirius and Lupin watched him with somewhat amusement.

“Prongs, you’re going to get dizzy, come and sit down.” Sirius joked as James threw him an annoyed look. Lupin chuckled as well but gave James a sympathetic look.

“They will be here soon Prongs, have patience. I’m sure that if it was really bad news Dumbledore wouldn’t have decided to announce it in front of everyone, before telling you and Lily.”

At this James stopped his pacing and looked at Lupin. He sighed and came and sat down.

“I guess you’re right, but why he couldn’t just come now and tell us before the meeting. I mean we are Harry’s parents after all, don’t you think we deserve to know the fate of our son before everyone else?” James was raking his hand through his messy hair again.

Lily appeared in the room and gave the three marauders a quick, nervous smile. She walked over to James.

“Did you tell him?” she asked quietly.

James looked lost.

“Um...tell who what?” he asked dumbly. A look of annoyance flashed in Lily’s eyes.

“Did you tell Harry to stay in his room tonight at the time of the meeting?” She asked.

“Oh, that, well yes, I mean no, not yet.”

Sirius and Lupin couldn’t keep the grins away from their faces. They loved it when James got tongue tied in front of Lily. But then again who wouldn’t when Lily’s green eyes were burning into you.

“James, you said you would, it is only ten minutes before everyone starts arriving. Please go and tell him.”

“Lils, sweetheart, do you really think it’s necessary. I mean we could just lock the door without having to explain anything to Harry, he might not even notice...” James trailed off at the look of anger on Lily’s face and mumbled something about going now and telling Harry before leaving the room.

James knocked on Harry's door and opened it to find Harry sitting up on the bed, reading a book about the Dark Arts. 'Perfect' thought James angrily. He would have to have a word with Sirius about the content of the library.

"Hey Harry, I just wanted to let you know that there is a small meeting today downstairs."

"Okay" Harry replied, not even looking up from his book.

"It is just some people from the Order and I don't want them to know that you are here just now."

"Okay" Harry replied again in a bored voice.

"I am afraid I am going to have to lock you in."

"Right"

"Just until the meeting, after they are gone I'll unlock it."

"Whatever"

"Okay I'm going to go now."

"Right"

"I'm locking you in now."

"You do that."

James could tell from Harry's voice that he was mad at being locked in. Truth be told so would James, if he were to be put into that situation. James closed the door after looking at Harry one last time. Harry had still not looked up from his book. James closed the door with a sigh. He touched the door with his wand and muttered the spell to lock it.

James hated lying to Harry, most of the Order knew Harry was here by now, but that didn't mean they were happy about it. Most of the Order agreed with Moody. They thought that Harry should not get any preferential treatment just because he was a Potter. James slowly

made his way downstairs, lost in his miserable thoughts. Harry was best to be kept out of the way, for Harry's own safety.

When James entered the room, which was to hold the Order meeting, he found that most of the Order had now arrived, except the Weasley family. He gave Lily a small smile and a quick nod to show that Harry was safe upstairs. She smiled back at him. However their smiles were wiped off their faces instantly when the fireplace erupted in green flames and Damien appeared along with the entire Weasley family.

"Hey Mum, Hey Dad."

Damien walked over slowly to his stunned parents and gave them a quick hug.

"What wrong, aren't you happy to see me, it's the first time in a week." Damien was looking at the astonished looks on his parents faces. Lily recovered quickly.

"Of course we are happy to see you. It's just that we were not expecting you, that's all."

She quickly pulled him in a hug and planted a kiss on his forehead. Damien just blushed and muttered something about 'not in public'. Lily smiled at him. She had missed her youngest son this last week and was glad to see him again, but she felt nervous as well. Harry was just a few feet away from them and Damien didn't even know about him yet. She looked worryingly over to James who seemed to be in deep discussion with Mr Weasley.

Molly hurried over and ushered the teenagers to the other room. She took them to one of the bedrooms on the second floor and told them that they were forbidden to leave. As she left the six teenagers, Fred, George, Ron, Damien, Hermione and Ginny went instantly into a meeting of their own.

"So, what do you think happened this time?" Ginny asked as she and Hermione flopped onto one of the beds in the huge room.

"It has to be big, never saw so many people attend a meeting before." Fred was saying as he sat on one of the chairs, while putting his feet up on the table.

"Yeah, well they've not had a meeting for awhile. Maybe they're just catching up with the recent attacks." Hermione suggested thoughtfully.

"Nah, this meeting is big." George said with a smirk on his face.

"What makes you say that?" asked Damien who was sitting on the other bed with Ron.

"Heard mum talking to dad this morning, she was saying that this meeting was going to 'determine the future' and that 'Dumbledore better know what he's doing playing such a dangerous game.'"

Everyone was eying George as he playfully took a bow.

"How did you hear that?" asked Ron looking at his brother with an awed expression.

"With these!" George held up something that looked like a bit of flesh coloured string. It was really long and looked like nothing anyone had ever seen before.

"Wow, what is that?" asked Damien as he climbed off the bed and came over to George to take a closer look at these things.

"Extendable Ears." he said proudly as Fred smiled and winked at him.

"I slipped these under their bedroom door and heard the whole conversation, well as much as I could before Perfect Percy came and told me to go away, stupid git!" George had a really ugly look on his face now.

"But you know you shouldn't have been eavesdropping anyway..." started Hermione but was cut off by the look on Damien and Ron's face.

“Hmm, ‘decide the future’, ‘dangerous game’ whatever could they have been talking about?” Ginny asked with a curious look on her pretty face.

“Well sis, why don’t we go and find out.” Fred got up and took out five pairs of the extendable ears and handed everyone a pair.

“Wow you came prepared.” commented Hermione.

“Well the house didn’t get infested by pixies, just as the Order meeting was going to start by chance.” Fred and George were stifling their laughter at the look on the other four faces.

“You...you did that!” Ginny didn’t know whether to scowl or cheer.

“But how are we going to get rid of them?” Ron asked.

“Don’t worry, they’re temporary, once they run out of active enzyme they will just fade away.” Fred took another bow as Ginny and Damien were clapping their hands in praise.

“You...you designed them, wow that is really advanced magic, how did you...” Hermione was cut off by the sound of shouting coming from downstairs.

The six of them looked at each other and then ran to the door.

xxx

Harry was fuming. As soon as James had left the room he had leapt out of bed and had made his way, as quietly as he could to the door. He heard the magical click as the door was sealed shut. Harry waited a few minutes. He heard the sound of six or seven people, nosily making their way to the second floor. When he was sure there was no one around, he took a step back from the door and placed his hand on the door. He closed his eyes and focused his mind on the magic sealing the door. He had been studying wandless magic since he was fourteen and had used it on numerous occasions. He let the power flow through his fingers and neutralise the magic around the door. The door clicked open within a minute.

Harry couldn't help but smile. He was going home. He knew that with so many people coming to the Order meetings the wards would be down. He knew for a fact that families of the members usually came to the meetings but were not actively involved in the meeting itself. He had learned this information while studying the Order last year. He knew that non members of the Order would not have been able to enter or exit the house with the wards up, so they had to be temporarily brought down. This was the chance Harry had been waiting for.

He stepped out of the room and looked around quickly. There was no one around. He quickly went over to the stairs and crept quietly down them. He reached the bottom of the stairs and released the breath he was holding. Harry crept quietly towards the door. He knew he was taking a huge risk; he had no wand, and had not fully healed yet. He paused briefly as he neared the room that the meeting was being held in. He knew that the door probably had the *Silencio* charm placed on it so that no one could eavesdrop. Harry crept towards the door and reached it within a couple of minutes. He places a trembling hand on the handle and pulled the door open. He nearly cried out with joy as the door opened and he felt the cool air rush to greet him. He had not stepped outside in seven days and this feeling of being in the open air was making Harry feel giddy.

Harry had placed one foot out of the door when he felt a strong hand grip his shoulder. Harry was pulled inside violently before Harry could even turn around to see who had caught him. The door had been closed and locked with a wave of a wand and Harry whirled around to end up face-to-face with an infuriated looking James Potter. Harry blinked at him in surprise. He had not even heard him approach behind him, how the hell did he catch him? Harry suddenly was filled with fury. James Potter had spoiled his plans to escape, he had stopped Harry from getting home and away from this horrible place.

James yanked Harry away from the door and hissed at him.

"Get upstairs! Now!"

Harry tried to twist out of his grip but James was now pointing his wand at him. This did nothing to calm Harry's rising temper.

“Let me go!” Harry shouted.

“Get upstairs!” James grabbed Harry roughly by the upper arm and dragged the boy up the stairs.

Harry shouted again and tried to yank his arm out of James’s hand.

“Let go of me! Let me go Potter!”

James arrived in front of Harry’s room and pushed Harry roughly into the room. James went in and closed the door behind him.

xxx

Damien and his five friends opened the door and stepped out into the dimly lit hallway. They could hear shouting from the floor below. They peered over the banister in time to see James Potter dragging a boy towards a room. Damien watched as his dad roughly pushed a teenage boy into a room before going in himself and slamming the door shut. The six teenagers had only seen the back of the boy and in the dim lighting had not been able to make out any features. They looked at each other and quietly crept back to their room.

“What the hell was that?” asked Ron looking at Fred and George as if they had planned this.

“Who was that boy?” Ginny asked a little worriedly.

“Yeah and why was your dad being so rough with him, it looks like he was hurting him.” Hermione asked a very puzzled Damien.

“I don’t know, my dad would never hurt someone on purpose, I don’t understand.” Damien replied in a small voice.

“Well, there’s only one way to find out, Damien did you bring the map?” Fred asked.

Damien pulled out a blank piece of parchment. He tapped it with his wand and whispered;

“I solemnly swear that I am up to no good in the Black Manor.”

The blank piece of parchment suddenly filled with a detailed map of the Black Manor. The only section of the map that remained blank was the room that the meeting was taking place in. When Sirius had given this map to Damien he had explained that it was vital that everything about the Order was kept a secret, including its members.

The six children quickly scanned the map in the hope that the identity of this mysterious boy would be revealed. They saw the room where they were all standing. There were six little dots with their names next to them. They scanned to the room below them and spotted the two dots standing in the room. Damien felt the world stop as he read the name next to his fathers.

Harry James Potter.

Chapter Fourteen

The six teenagers stood in shock reading and re-reading the name over and over again.

“Harry Potter, who’s that?” Ron asked quietly.

Everyone looked at Damien. The thirteen year old stood with his mouth slightly open and his hazel eyes fixed on the name. Damien had always wanted to know more about his family, being an only child Damien was desperate to have even a cousin, however distant, to be able to have some sort of company other than adults. His parents had told him that his only cousin was his aunt Petunia’s son Dudley Dursley, who was very obnoxious, like the rest of his family, towards Damien and his parents. They were muggles who hated magic and anything to do with magic. Even though his aunt had been his mother’s only sister, she and Lily had never got on. James has told Damien that he had no aunts or uncles from his side and that there were no other Potters alive, other than them.

Damien was staring at the name again. Who was this? And if he was a Potter then why was his dad being so hostile towards him? Damien finally tore his eyes away from the map and looked at his friends.

“We need to find out who he is.” he said quietly to them.

Fred and George’s expression suddenly changed from curious to mischievous. The mock saluted him and rushed to the door. The other four hurried behind them. When they reached the first floor landing George hushed orders to everyone.

“Okay, here’s the plan, Ron, you and Damien take these and carefully slip them under the door, Hermione and Ginny, you both play spy and go downstairs.” at this both girls started to object, rather loudly.

“Shh, in the name of heaven girls, keep it down! We need you two to tell us if someone is coming upstairs. We will tell you everything word for word, promise.” Fred sent the two complaining girls away and turned to see that Damien and Ron had slipped four ear strings under the door.

“Perfect”

The four boys quickly stuck the ear piece into their own ears and began listening to the fierce argument coming from the room.

“...sneaking out in the middle of the night! I mean honestly Harry, do you have a death wish?” James’s angry voice was ringing in their ears.

“The only wish that I have is to get out of this miserable hell hole and back home!”

Damien felt his heart skip a beat. That voice was oddly enough like his own. He felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand up. ‘This is so creepy’ he thought to himself.

“Home! Harry when are you going to accept that this is your home, your real home.” James sounded thoroughly exhausted, like he had stressed this point before.

The four boys shared a look before continuing to listen in. At least this confirmed that ‘Harry’ was in fact a member of the Potter family.

“Never! No matter how long you force me to stay here, I’m never going to call this my home. So you can just stop trying Potter!”

Damien let out a small gasp. Why did this boy just address Damien’s dad like that? Damien looked over at the Weasley boys who were looking quite baffled.

“I’m warning you Harry, never talk to me like that again, do you hear?”

Damien could tell that his dad was clenching his teeth and talking. ‘Never a good sign’ Damien thought to himself.

“Like what? I haven’t said anything wrong, just stated the facts!” the boy called Harry replied with just as much anger.

“You know very well what I mean, if you can’t address me as anything else then at least don’t refer to me as ‘Potter’, after all you are a ‘Potter’ as well!”

Before Damien could hear the response to this, an angry shout was heard coming from downstairs. The four boys quickly tore the extendable ears out of their ears and ran to the second floor. They made it just in time, they flung themselves to different corners of the room, pretending to be busy with one thing or another. The door opened and a very red and embarrassed looking Hermione and Ginny came through the door, followed by Mrs Weasley.

“Boys! What were you doing, sending the girls like that, don’t you ever think about the consequences?” Mrs Weasley was looking livid.

The boys in question glared at the two girls and looked in shame at the fuming Mrs Weasley. Before any of them could open their mouths to say anything she continued.

“Hermione has only been here once! How could you ask her to go and get you food, honestly! You had been told that you will get dinner after the meeting, you just don’t listen to me.”

The four boys looked at each other and then turned to look at the two blushing girls who stood awkwardly next to Mrs Weasley.

“Sorry Mum.” muttered Ron while the other three nodded their heads in agreement.

Mrs Weasley left the room, promising them that food would be ready in the next thirty minutes. Once she was gone the four boys rounded on the girls.

“We sent you to get *food!*” Ron asked Hermione.

“Well you didn’t give us any pre-made excuses, so we just had to come up with one on the spot.” Hermione answered still looking very red.

“And that was the best you could do?” came Fred’s sarcastic voice.

“Oh, who cares? She bought it didn’t she? Now tell us, what did you guys overhear? Who is that boy?” Ginny looked excitedly at the four boys.

It took less than five minutes to tell the girls exactly what they had overheard. The two girls sat silently, listening to the conversation that happened between this ‘Harry Potter’ and James Potter. Hermione was the first to speak up.

“So this Harry Potter said that he was being forced to stay here?” she asked Ron.

Ron nodded his head, looking thoroughly confused.

“It just doesn’t make any sense and the way he was talking to Mr Potter. He sounded right pissed off with him.”

“Yeah and what was the whole ‘death wish’ thing? Why would anyone here try and hurt your cousin?” Fred asked Damien.

Damien looked up at Fred with a startled look.

“My...my what?” he asked confused.

“Well, he has to be your cousin. Who else could he be?” answered Fred.

Damien thought about this. It did make sense. Was it possible that maybe this was a long lost relative that even his parents didn’t know about until now? That was probably why they never told Damien, after all why would they keep anything from him, right?

Damien was lost in his thoughts while the rest of the teenagers made up other possible explanations that would solve this mystery surrounding Harry Potter. No one even came close to the truth.

xxx

Harry sat across from James. He had made himself comfortable on the bed as James paced the floor, still ranting on and about how ‘dangerous sneaking out’ could have been and ‘why Harry was

determined to hurt himself' Harry was beginning to tune him out. He had been literally hoping mad when he was forced back into this room, Harry had argued with James and shouted at him. However, now Harry was getting tired and just annoyed with James. 'Why doesn't he just shut up and get lost!' he thought to himself. James stopped pacing and walked towards Harry. He stopped right in front of the raven haired boy and crouched low so that he could see into Harry's eyes...

"Harry, why can't you understand that I don't want you getting hurt?" James said with his voice full of emotion.

Harry looked at James straight in the eyes and replied.

"Why?" Harry watched as James looked fit to break down.

"Why do you care what happens to me? I am not your son anymore, why do..." Harry was interrupted by a soft knock at the door. He and James looked over at the door and saw Lily poke her head inside.

"What happened?" she asked as she saw the hurt look on James's face and the annoyed look on Harry's. James straightened up and looked at his son through glazed eyes.

"Nothing, just talking over something."

Harry looked at James, wondering why he was lying. Harry looked away and started to gaze out of the window. He wished the Potters would just go away. He hated this act they did, pretending to care about him, telling him outright lies of how much they had missed him and how they wanted to protect him. It made Harry feel sick with rage. He closed his eyes and tried to push down his anger.

"Well, the meeting is finished. Dumbledore wants you and Harry to come downstairs so he can fill you in."

Lily was looking at both of them curiously. She knew something was up. James would not have missed this meeting for anything, so why was he up here instead arguing with Harry? She shook her head a little. 'I'll just ask James later' she thought as she followed James and Harry out of the door and back downstairs to the meeting.

There was only Mr and Mrs Weasley, Sirius and Remus left sitting at the table with Dumbledore. Everyone else had gone home. Dumbledore looked up at the three people who came in. James was looking very anxious and tired and Harry looked just plain bored. Dumbledore chuckled slightly to himself. It really should be Harry looking anxious and worried, since this meeting was about his future. Dumbledore motioned for them to sit down. Once the three Potters were seated Dumbledore cleared his throat and spoke.

"I am sure you are quite anxious to know what the outcome was of my meeting with the Minister." he addressed Harry.

James nodded his head a little, while Harry merely looked at his hands, as though seeing them for the first time. Dumbledore continued.

"I am glad to inform you that the Minister has agreed, to the most part, with my suggestion." he paused here again to see if his words had any effect on Harry. The raven haired teen continued to examine his nails in a very cheeky manner and was acting as if he couldn't hear Dumbledore.

"There are some conditions set which I am not entirely in agreement with but, hopefully the circumstances should not arise to enforce these conditions." Dumbledore continued.

Harry sighed and looked up at Dumbledore.

"Are you planning on telling us what your master plan is, or are you just going to talk nonsense all night?" Harry asked while boring his emerald green eyes into Dumbledore's midnight blue ones.

A collective gasp was heard around the table at Harry's insolence. Mrs Weasley looked like she would like nothing better than to go over to Harry and clip him on the ear for such rudeness.

Harry smirked and continued to stare cheekily at Dumbledore. The Headmaster looked momentarily stunned but had overcome this quickly and bowed his head slightly towards Harry.

“My apologies, Harry. I really should have started with explaining the nature of my suggestion. Very well, I will explain it to you now.” he was actually glad to be able to look at Harry directly than Harry’s hung head as it made what he was going to say a lot easier.

“You see Harry, I went to see the Minister on the day you arrived here. I explained your true identity to Minister Fudge and asked him to reconsider his decision of handing you over to the Dementors without trial. I explained the sensitive nature of how you were tricked and fooled into carrying out those awful deeds and...” Dumbledore was cut off as Harry bellowed:

“I WAS NOT! I KNEW PERFECTLY WELL WHAT I WAS DOING! HOW DARE YOU SAY I WAS FOOLED AND TRICKED BY MY OWN FATHER!”

Harry lunged forward to grab Dumbledore by the neck. Instantly Sirius, Arthur and James had grabbed onto the boy and pulled him back into his seat.

“Mr Potter, please restrain yourself or we will do it for you.” Arthur said to the struggling Harry in a stern voice.

Harry stopped struggling and gave Arthur a death glare. Harry didn’t fancy being tied down to his chair. He sat back and tried to shake off James’s grip on his arm but James only tightened it.

Dumbledore had sat quietly as Harry had his outburst. He didn’t even flinch as the boy had tried to attack him. He was expecting this kind of reaction from Harry, but he was not going to disguise his words, he was going to tell Harry the truth about his so called father.

“Harry, I understand how you must feel right now. You may think we are trying to deceive you and lead you away from the man you call father. I assure you we are not trying to deceive you. We are in fact trying to bring out the truth. You, my boy have been lied to most of your life...”

Dumbledore stopped as he saw Harry try to free himself from James and attempt to attack him once more. Dumbledore sighed to himself. ‘This is not working’. The Headmaster looked at Harry again and this

time leaned in closer to the struggling boy. Harry stopped struggling with James and scowled at Dumbledore, daring him to come closer.

“Okay, Harry, we won’t talk about that just yet. Please let me finish my say on what is to happen with you.”

At this Harry opened his mouth to say he didn’t care what Dumbledore had to say and that he would probably not do what he was told to do in any case. However the firm grip on his arm tightened just as Harry had opened his mouth. Harry winced and shut his mouth again, but not before glaring at James.

“It has been agreed that you will remain out of the custody of the Ministry. There will be no trial as there will be no arrest.”

James let go of Harry and sat open mouthed at this. Harry was not going to Azkaban! He was not being charged for murder! This was probably the best thing that could have happened. James had wished endlessly for a miracle that would leave them in custody of Harry and somehow keep Harry out of the Ministry’s grasp. However, as wonderful as this sounded, James knew it wasn’t the full story. ‘There must be a downside to this’ he thought to himself.

“However Harry, this does not mean that you are free to go back home. You are to remain in my custody until you are seventeen.” Dumbledore took in the shocked faces of Harry and James.

“You see that was my suggestion to the Minister. I asked him to leave you in my custody. I would be responsible for you.”

James interrupted Dumbledore.

“I’m sorry Dumbledore, but how can you do that, I mean Lily and I are responsible for Harry. We are his parents! If anyone should look after Harry it should be us.” James was looking at Dumbledore as if he were a traitor, trying to take away his son.

“James, my boy. That is exactly what the Minister did not want. Harry staying with his parents, as it could lead to Harry’s escape back to Voldemort.”

"I am still going to go back home, whether I stay with you or them."
Harry hissed at Dumbledore.

"If I can't get back home then my father will come looking for me."

Dumbledore smiled at him and said in a very low voice.

"That is why Harry, you are coming to Hogwarts."

Harry sat in shock. What was this old fool thinking? Harry couldn't go to Hogwarts. Harry knew that it was impossible to escape from Hogwarts and that it was the one place his father could never come to rescue him. Nonetheless did Dumbledore not realise the risk Harry would pose?

Dumbledore wouldn't endanger the entire school like that, would he?

"Dumbledore, how is that even possible?" James was sounding as shocked as Harry was feeling.

"Well it is possible and the Minister has given his consent for Harry to be enrolled into the sixth year of Hogwarts." Dumbledore smiled at the shocked looks that he was getting.

"Now you may be wondering why the Minister has consented to this, so let me explain. It is unfortunately not as simple as it seems. There are conditions set against this. Harry will remain in my custody until he reaches the age of seventeen. If by this time Harry has shown no intentions of returning to Lord Voldemort and working as the Dark Prince, then he will be pardoned and there will be no action taken against his crimes. It will be looked at as a case of the IIC, Imperio Induced Crimes. If he returns to Lord Voldemort or shows resistance to living in the wizarding world as a law abiding wizard, then he will be charged with the murders he has committed and will probably serve a life sentence in Azkaban. They might even give him the Kiss if he is found guilty of all charges." Dumbledore stopped here to look at the heart broken faces of James and Lily.

"It is my intention to show you, Harry, the error of your judgement and to let you see the real wizarding world for what it is. I know that you have been told many things about me and what my beliefs are. I am

giving you a chance to see for yourself.” He looked directly at Harry as he spoke.

Harry was looking at Dumbledore with a questioning look.

“Why are you so intent on showing me your ways, what makes you think that I will even listen to you?” Harry asked him.

“Because Harry, you are not what you seem. I can see beyond the mask you wear. I can see the true *you* in the Dark Prince. You are not evil even if you wish for us to believe that you are.”

Harry snorted and glared at Dumbledore before answering.

“Whoever said that I’m evil?” he looked at the confused expressions all around the room before continuing.

“There is no good and evil Dumbledore, there is only power. Power is what everyone is really after. In the end it comes down to who is worthy of having it. You may think that what I have done is evil. Well I can say the same to you. Your Order and your Ministry will take a man down no matter what the consequences. They will not hesitate to kick someone when they are down. They are just as ruthless as any Death Eater.”

He finished and looked directly at Sirius who was blushing furiously. He knew that Sirius was remembering the first day of Harry’s capture. How he and Moody had tormented Harry. How Moody had viciously kicked Harry in his already broken ribs. Harry smiled to himself. ‘Serves him right’ he thought as he watched the black haired man squirm uncomfortably in his seat.

“Harry, the words you speak are not your own. I want to show you the truth, after that you can make your own decision.” Dumbledore was amazed to hear the words again which had been spoken to him years ago by a certain red eyed man.

Harry snorted once again at this.

“My own decision, hmm let me see, Azkaban or house arrest, yeah I see the clear winner!” Harry mocked.

“Harry, I knew that you would feel this way, but I am sorry to say that you really don’t have a say in this. You will be coming to Hogwarts on the 1st of September, like all the other children of the wizarding world. You will learn the truth of this war.” Dumbledore was beginning to sound tired.

“And what if I refuse to come with you?” Harry asked already knowing the answer.

“Harry you will come along, one way or another.” there was definitely a threatening tone to the old man’s voice.

“Fine! But how are you going to stop the other kids from protesting against me being in the same school as them! And what about their parents. Surely no sane parent would want their child being in such close proximity to the Dark Prince.” Harry was sure that he had Dumbledore cornered. Dumbledore merely laughed and replied.

“Well, that is not a problem as you have done us all a favour by being hidden behind that silver mask. No one has ever seen your face, so they will not know your identity. A few students who must be informed of your past will be instructed to keep that information secret, otherwise face expulsion.”

Harry looked at the Headmaster in complete disbelief. He was ready to kick out children from their own school if they told anyone about Harry. He imagined the face of his best friend. Draco would probably strut around the entire school singing ‘Harry is the Dark Prince’ and that ‘he is the Dark Lord’s heir’ and ‘his best friend’. He shook his head to clear his thoughts.

“What if I told someone my true identity?” he asked thinking that he couldn’t possibly suffer the same fate as the other children.

“Oh, I am sure that you will be able to keep that a secret. As I am sure you feel the same as most do when it comes to the Dementors Kiss. I don’t want that to be your fate Harry, but if you leave me no choice I will be forced to hand you over to the Ministry, who will subject you to the Kiss without hesitation.”

Dumbledore smiled back at Harry as he threw him the dirtiest look he could muster.

“Well, if that is all then I best be going. I shall send you your book lists and other documents soon so that you are fully prepared for your school year.” Dumbledore stood up and made his way to the fireplace.

Before Harry could say anything James stood up and called out to Dumbledore.

“Albus! Wait, I have a question?”

Dumbledore turned around to face James and smiled at him.

“Will we be able to bring Harry home? Even if it is just for a day or two, you know over Christmas or something.” he asked in a small voice.

He couldn’t bear the thought of not seeing Harry again for so long. He had just got Harry back and now his son was going to be taken away again.

“Of course, Harry can come home for Christmas, if that is what he wants. I am sure you all can discuss it with him as a family at Hogwarts.” Dumbledore replied with a twinkle in his eyes.

“What do you mean?” asked a confused James.

“Did I not mention it James? You are coming to Hogwarts as well.” Dumbledore replied.

xxx

Lord Voldemort was not pleased. It had been seven days since his son had been taken by that wretched Order and there were still no improvements in rescuing him.

Voldemort had been told that Harry was being held at the headquarters of the Order. This was worrying the Dark Lord to no end. It would have been easier to rescue Harry if he had been held at the Ministry or even Azkaban, but if Harry was being held by the Order then it was near enough impossible to get to him.

Voldemort thought about Albus Dumbledore and felt the anger burn inside of him. He pushed all thoughts about the old fool away. He had to get to Harry. He needed his son back with him.

Lord Voldemort hadn't realised how much he had depended on Harry. Not only for the assignments but for his company as well. When Harry was much younger he would annoy Lord Voldemort in his childish ways for attention. At those times Voldemort could barely restrain himself from cursing the ignorant child. But now, Voldemort realised that somehow Harry had managed to crawl into Lord Voldemort's heart and had made himself a part of the Dark Lord. Harry had become someone Lord Voldemort *needed* in his life. If the Dark Lord was to ever lose Harry, there would be hell to pay.

Voldemort was brought out of his thoughts with a knock at the door. With a wave of his hand the door opened to reveal a Death Eater with long greasy hair. The Death Eater kneeled in front of Voldemort and waited for the command to rise to his feet. Lord Voldemort greeted his 'spy' Death Eater.

"Severus, I hope you have brought me some useful news about my son."

Severus Snape gave an involuntary shudder. 'Damn that Dumbledore for sending me in with such news' he thought to himself.

Snape picked himself up from the floor and tried to find the courage to tell his master his news.

"I have news about the Dark Prince, My Lord." Snape started.

Lord Voldemort stood up from his throne and silently walked over to Snape. He stood towering over the Death Eater.

"What news do you bring Severus?"

"My Lord, the Dark Prince is going to be moved to another location."

Snape hesitated for a second, silently cursing Albus Dumbledore.

"My Lord, The Dark Prince is going to Hogwarts."

Chapter Fifteen

Mrs Weasley climbed to the second floor to announce that dinner was ready. The six teens in the room were still deep in conversation. They made their way downstairs quickly. They all stared at the second room on the first floor as they passed it wondering if the mysterious 'Potter' was still inside or not.

Damien was hoping that he wasn't. He was really hoping that this new family member was going to be introduced to everyone at dinner. He had convinced himself that due to the Order meeting taking place today, his parents weren't able to introduce him earlier. Surely this Harry will be joining the family for dinner. He was however disappointed when he entered the dining room. Other than his parents, Sirius, Remus and Mr Weasley there was no one else present. Damien exchanged a dark look with Ron. Both boys had quietly decided to confront their parents about the hidden boy upstairs.

Damien sat across from his dad. He took a good look at his dad's tired face which looked a lot older all of a sudden. James was deep in talk with Sirius and Damien could swear he heard 'Hogwarts' being mentioned a couple of times.

James and Lily exchanged a nervous glance with each other. They both were worried about Harry. James was going to come to Hogwarts as Harry's guard. James was going to keep an eye on Harry at all times, an agreement to which Harry had very audibly and aggressively made his feelings clear. Harry had only stopped screaming abuse at James and Dumbledore because of a sudden pain in his head. Harry had clutched his forehead and had cried out in obvious pain. Before anyone could help him though Harry had took off and had stumbled his way back to his room, refusing help from anyone.

Damien tore his eyes away from his anxious looking parents. Damien watched as the Weasley children and Hermione ate enthusiastically but he felt like his appetite had disappeared. He had decided to speak to his parents in private but decided on the spur of the moment that no time was like the present.

“Dad”

“Yeah Dady.”

Damien took in a breath as he calmed his beating heart.

“Who’s Harry Potter?”

The table hushed into complete silence. It was eerie since there were so many people seated around the table. Everyone had stopped eating and was now staring at either James or Damien.

James was stunned with Damien’s question. He finally managed to find his voice as he asked.

“What?”

“I asked who’s Harry Potter.”

Damien couldn’t understand why all the adults were looking at him solemnly.

“How did you...where did you learn that name?”

Damien was getting increasingly agitated. He had asked a simple question, and instead of getting a simple answer, his dad was acting like Damien had uttered an unholy forbidden word. Damien kept his eyes on his dad while reaching into his robes and pulling out the old parchment that was the map to the Back manor.

“I saw it next to a little dot, talking to another little dot with your name on it.” he answered a little sarcastically.

Damien saw both his mum and dad turn to glare at Sirius, who in turn seemed to shrink a little. Sirius avoided their glares and just stared at his plate. He knew giving that map to Damien was going to get him into trouble someday.

“I want to know who he is. Why is he upstairs and why have you not mentioned anything about him?” Damien asked again.

Damien watched as his parents gave each other a sad look.

“Damien, we wanted to talk to you about this when we had a little more time, unfortunately a lot has been going on and we never got a chance to tell you...” Lily stopped and seemed to be fighting for words.

“Tell me what?” Damien was positively scared now.

This was not right. He had expected to be told that Harry was a distant relative that had just arrived that morning or that he was just visiting for a few days. He had not expected everyone to act like the sky had fallen on them. He saw his mum look uncomfortably at the Weasley family.

Mrs Weasley took the hint and got up quickly and started to usher everyone out of the dining room so that the Potters could have some privacy. Everyone got up and left but complained loudly that they wanted to know what was going on as well.

Once there was no one else in the room except for James, Lily and Damien, the truth about Harry was revealed.

Damien sat in shocked silence as James and Lily explained everything. How Harry was Damien’s older brother, how he was abducted at the age of fifteen months, how he was feared dead. They tried to explain the harsh circumstances in which Harry must have been brought up, how he had been brain washed into becoming the Dark Prince and how he has committed terrible crimes.

They knew that Damien must be going through hell just now. It was one of Damien’s deepest desires, to have a sibling, and now that his wish was granted, there was a possibility it might be horribly taken away from him. They also told him about Harry saving Madame Pomfrey’s children and the deal Dumbledore had made with the Minister. They wanted to give Damien a bit of hope with Dumbledore’s deal. A slight chance that all of them might end up as a happy family. James doubted this at this point in time, as Harry was not showing an ounce of positive feelings towards them.

James and Lily finished with the future plan of Harry coming to Hogwarts with James as his guard. James watched Damien for his reaction.

The thirteen year old sat in his chair looking at his hands. He had a shocked look on his young face and hadn't interrupted once. Lily looked over at James worriedly.

"Damy, I know this all has come as a shock and you are probably very angry with us for not telling you sooner, but we really didn't want to say anything to you until we knew what the future was going to be like for Harry. We were only just informed at the Order meeting today about the plans for Harry and your dad to go to Hogwarts." Lily looked at Damien as he slowly lifted his head and looked directly at his mother.

Without a single word he stood up and made his way towards the door.

"Damien, where are you going?" Lily asked after him.

"Upstairs to see Harry." Damien said simply, without looking back.

James and Lily rushed to their feet and were blocking Damien's way before the teen had even reached over to turn the doorknob.

"No Damien, you can't go upstairs." both of them shouted at him.

"Why not!" Damien shouted right back at them.

"Damien, he...he's not safe...not right now." Lily was finding it hard not to burst into tears.

"Mum, he's my brother; he's not going to hurt me."

Damien tried explaining this as if his parents were crazy for even thinking something like that.

"Damy! Have you heard a single word we said? Harry doesn't think of himself as a part of this family. He's not going to consider you as his brother, not yet anyway." James felt his heart ache horribly as he watched Damien's face fall at his words.

James and Lily knew exactly how hurtful Harry could be. After all they had been with Harry for almost one week. They knew that if Harry

was treating his parents like dirt then he would probably do worse with his kid brother. Damien pushed away the hurt he felt at his dad's words.

"Well maybe if you were to treat him like a part of the family then he might be able to accept us." he said with an accusatory look at James.

James looked at Damien with confusion.

"What do you mean?" James asked

"Well, for a start, don't lock him in a room! Second, how about telling him a little about his family. I bet you kept me a secret from him like you kept him a secret from me!"

James and Lily looked at each other in humiliation. They had not mentioned Damien to Harry at all and now that Damien had mentioned it, it did seem really cruel to lock Harry in his room.

"Damien, we don't actually keep him locked up, we had to for this meeting, a lot of the Order members are very aggressive towards Harry and Harry doesn't do anything to help matters!" James was thinking about Moody in particular.

Damien was beginning to get desperate now.

"Look mum, dad, you just told me that I have an older brother and that he is only a few feet away from me but I can't meet him! You can't do that to me! It's just cruel. Please just let me see him." Damien pleaded.

James and Lily looked at their younger son and felt their heart break at the look of desperation on his face. But they were the parents, they knew better. Harry was in a towering rage at being told he was going to be forced to stay in Hogwarts under the constant eye of James. Now was not the time to be meeting anyone. Lily took a deep breath and looked at Damien straight in the eyes.

"No Damien and that is my last word. I don't want to hear anymore about this subject. Finish your dinner and then return back with the Weasleys. You can meet Harry later."

Damien had never felt such rage at his parents. He looked from one to the other trying to see if there was any room for further argument. He didn't see any.

"When am I going to be able to meet him? In Hogwarts! You really think that's fair. I get to see my brother for the first time in *school*. You guys must be joking." he finished.

"We are not joking and the 1st of September is only a week away. Now finish your dinner and get ready to go to the Burrow!" Lily was turning the same colour as her hair, and that was not a good sign.

However Damien had inherited her fiery temper and was not going to go quietly.

"FINE! Have it your way! This is awkward enough and now you guys are really going to mess it up. I get to see Harry for the first time along with the entire bloody school. Brilliant! Thank you very much!"

With that said the youngest Potter stormed around his parents, wrenched open the door and ran to the other room where the Order meeting had taken place. He slammed the door open and didn't even stop to look at the shocked faces of Hermione and the Weasley family, as they were sitting talking about the true identity of Harry Potter. Damien stormed towards the fireplace and wrenched the pot holding floo powder open. He grabbed a fistful and before anyone could say anything he threw it into the flames and stepped in.

"The Burrow!" he said between clenched teeth and before anyone could stop him, he was transported to the empty Burrow.

xxx

The next few days seem to pass uneventfully. Damien was still in a mood with his parents and refused to speak to them. James and Lily had instantly gone after Damien to the Burrow followed by the Weasley family and Hermione. Damien had mostly ignored them and refused to even acknowledge that they were there.

"Brilliant, now that makes two of them!" James had said to Lily when they came back to the headquarters.

The Weasley family didn't really know what to do or say. They all had been pretty shocked with the true identity of Harry but unlike Damien they were not eager to meet him at all. The Weasley boys were outraged that the boy who had hurt so many people and even killed was going to come to Hogwarts and not be punished for everything that he had done. What was more, Professor Dumbledore had come to the Burrow the next day after the Order meeting and asked the six teens attending Hogwarts to be civil to Harry and to try and make him feel as welcome as possible.

Damien was trying his best not to lose his patience. That was mostly because of Percy Weasley. He was sick of hearing all the foul things that Percy had told him about the 'Dark Prince'. Percy was working for the Ministry and was taking immense pleasure in reporting the crimes that were carried out by Harry. Damien had finally cracked and had snapped at Percy one night.

"You know what Percy? It sounds to me as if Harry's done the Ministry a favour by getting rid of the really dangerous Death Eaters since the *Ministry* wasn't up to the task!"

That had shut Percy up. However Damien couldn't make any excuse up for his brother when it came to the deaths of the Longbottoms. Damien was good friends with Neville and it had completely devastated Damien to learn that it was Harry who was responsible for orphaning Neville. However Damien was so desperate to make things work out with Harry that he tried not to think about his brother as the Dark Prince. Damien managed to push the crimes committed by the Dark Prince to the back of his mind. Anytime the Dark Prince was mentioned by Percy, Damien had mentally repeated to himself, 'Harry had been brain washed, he'd been brain washed, probably the Imperio, he'd been brain washed'.

Back at the Order headquarters things were not any better. After the meeting with Dumbledore, Harry had taken quiet refuge in his room again. He hardly spoke to anyone and gave James cold glares whenever he could. James sighed as he crept into bed one night.

"I don't know how I can spend any time with Harry being so cold towards me. I don't think me being his guard was such a good idea."

"Nonsense James, Harry will open up to us once he gets to Hogwarts. You know what its like. That place brings out the best in everyone. Just wait and see." Lily tried to comfort him.

xxx

"Okay, now you remember what you're going to say if Mrs Weasley asks you anything." Damien asked a very nervous looking Ron.

"Yeah" Ron replied

"Right, Hermione, you and Ginny have to keep Mrs Weasley busy with something or another I'll hopefully be back soon." Damien watched as the girls shared a worried look with Ron. Damien sighed. He knew what question was coming.

"Damy, are you sure you want to do this?" Ginny asked.

"For the hundredth time, YES! I want to do this. Don't you guys understand? I need to do this. There is no way I'm going to meet my brother for the first time in Hogwarts." Damien finished looking at his friends angrily.

Damien knew it wasn't his friends fault but he couldn't help shouting at them in frustration.

Damien was sure that his silent treatment on his parents would have resulted in then letting Damien meet Harry. However, James and Lily just left Damien to sulk and didn't give in to his demands. It was now the day before school started and Damien was extremely desperate to see Harry.

Damien went over the plan in his head again. He was going to floo over to his house and 'borrow' his dad's invisibility cloak and use it to sneak into the headquarters. Damien was going to have to wait until his uncle Sirius came over to the Burrow. He was then planning to slip away with Sirius to the headquarters. Damien knew it was impossible to enter or exit the headquarters without a member of the Order so he was going to use the invisibility cloak and sneak into the fireplace with Sirius and floo to the headquarters. Once Damien got inside he was going to go and meet his brother for the very first time.

Damien felt the excitement and anxiety bubble within him. He didn't want to think about what would happen if he were to get caught. His parents would be so angry with him. Damien was sure he would be grounded for life! On the other hand if he wasn't caught he would get to finally meet his brother and hopefully speak to him before going to Hogwarts. The thought of meeting his long lost brother kept Damien from backing out of this plan. His friends were just as nervous as Damien. They kept on pointing out all of the potential things that could go wrong.

Hermione had pointed out the fact that Sirius was an intelligent man and would probably notice that there was someone with him in the fireplace.

Ron had pointed out that once Damien got inside the headquarters was fine but how was he supposed to come back out?

Ginny had kept on saying that the plan was never going to work since the headquarters must be guarded from the inside, especially with Harry being held there.

Damien had ignored all of them and had said that if worst came to worst he would own up to his parents and then just suffer the consequences.

Damien got up and prepared to floo over to his house. He waited with a handful of floo powder in his hand. He was standing at the fireplace for just about ten seconds when he got his signal.

"WHAT IN THE NAME OF MERLIN... FRED! GEORGE! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?" shrieked a voice from downstairs.

Damien didn't waste any more time, he threw in his handful of floo powder and stepped into the green flames.

"Godric's Hollow" he spoke clearly and was gone in an instant.

Ron, Hermione and Ginny stood and watched the spot where Damien had been standing, only a few seconds ago. They all prayed the plan worked.

The three teenagers turned and ran downstairs to see what distraction Fred and George had caused. Mrs Weasley was still screaming at the twins when they entered. Ron, Hermione and Ginny could barely stifle their laughter when they saw what had happened. All of the dishes had sprouted little legs and were running around the kitchen floor, the spoons were battling against the forks, and a kettle was pouring hot tea into the house plants, which were trying to hop away from the scolding liquid. Fred and George stood amongst the commotion and beamed at each other, while a very angry Mrs Weasley was shooting all sorts of curses out of her wand trying to control the situation. The five teenagers looked at each other and confirmed wordlessly that Damien had gone to the Potters manor. They all hoped the distraction caused would keep Mrs Weasley busy until Damien had returned with the cloak.

Sure enough Damien walked into the kitchen, half an hour later to find Mrs Weasley still shouting at Fred and George, who were both trying to convince their mum that they had only meant the dishes to wash by themselves and for the tea to be made of its own accord, so that Mrs Weasley could rest. Damien winked at the twins as he sat down at the dinning table. The cloak was folded neatly and hidden away in the inner pocket of his shirt. All Damien had to do now was wait for Sirius to come over and give all of them their Hogwarts Express tickets.

It was around 7pm before Sirius made an appearance. Damien watched his godfather as he laughed and chatted animatedly to the Weasley boys and felt a pang of jealousy. Damien had given his godfather the cold shoulder as well as his parents, since he felt that his relationship with Sirius was so strong that Sirius should have come and told Damien the truth about Harry. Sirius had tried to get Damien to talk to him but had no success. So when he arrived today he just gave Damien a big smile and made no further attempt to talk to his godson. He figured it would be better for Damien to come and talk to him when Damien felt he had forgiven him.

Damien took a deep breath and turned to look at Sirius.

“Uncle Siri, could you pass the potatoes please?”

Sirius stopped talking and looked at his godson. Damien had to stop himself from laughing at the look on Sirius' face. Sirius took the tray of potatoes and passed them over so enthusiastically that a few potatoes fell out of the tray and rolled across the table.

"Thanks" smiled Damien and took the tray and set it down beside him.

Sirius was looking very happy at the fact that his godson was now on talking terms with him.

After dinner all of them piled outside to play a game of Quidditch. Sirius and Damien sat on the front porch and watched the three boys and two girls take off into the sky, yelling at each other to play fairly.

"I love Quidditch." said Sirius softly.

"Do you know Dady, your dad and I became friends for the first time on Hogwarts Quidditch grounds?" asked Sirius.

"Yeah, I know. You and dad have told me the story like a thousand times already." replied Damien, although he was smiling while he replied.

"Oh sorry, it's just a great story."

"Uncle Siri, have you told the story to Harry yet?" Damien asked and he kept his eyes on his uncle's face to see what his reaction would be.

As expected Sirius's eyes darkened and the smile plastered across his face vanished.

"No, I've not been able to get around to that yet." He replied looking at the ground as he spoke.

"Got around to what, telling Harry that story, or just talking to him in general?" Damien didn't want to get angry with his godfather but Damien was finding it hard to control his emotions.

"Dady, it's not what you think. We all have tried talking to Harry, but Harry just doesn't want to know us. He just ignores us most of the time and the few times he has exchanged words with me they have

always been things like, 'Get out' or 'Leave' so I don't think he will appreciate any stories anybody tells him." Sirius spoke in a tired voice and Damien instantly felt his anger fade away.

"Sorry" he mumbled and he felt his godfather put an arm around his shoulder. Damien let his head lean onto Sirius's chest and closed his eyes for a moment.

Damien was feeling awful about his plan. He couldn't trick Sirius and go with him to the headquarters. If Damien was caught he would get Sirius into trouble as well. Damien quickly pushed his thoughts away and opened his eyes. He had to do this. If he got caught he would blame this onto his parents since they were the ones who wouldn't let him see Harry. Damien mumbled a quick goodnight to Sirius and made his way inside the Burrow.

Damien slipped on his father's cloak and crept into the fireplace in the dinning room. Damien knew this fireplace was the only one Sirius ever used. He thanked Merlin that it was a big fireplace, two people could easily floo from here. He stood next to one of the walls and pushed himself flat against it so that Sirius wouldn't be able to bump into him when he got in. Damien had to wait ten minutes before he heard Sirius saying his goodbyes. Damien held his breath. 'This is it' he thought to himself. He pushed himself further into the wall as Sirius stepped into the fireplace and nearly cried out as Sirius's robes brushed against him. Damien prayed that Sirius didn't notice. Sirius was still busy talking to Mr Weasley. Damien was breaking into a sweat. His legs shook a little from holding himself so taunt. At long last Sirius bid his goodbyes and threw the handful of floo powder into the flames and shouted,

"12 GRIMMAULD PLACE"

Damien felt the familiar spinning and held onto his cloak to keep it from flying off him. He managed to keep himself from falling out of the fireplace as he arrived behind Sirius. Damien stood in the fireplace for a couple of seconds. He saw his godfather brush his robes and leave the room quickly. Damien released the breath he was holding.

'I don't believe it. I did it! I made it into the headquarters without getting caught' Damien thought to himself.

'I should probably point this out to dad afterwards, if a thirteen year old can get into the headquarters with an invisibility cloak then the Order better get some other protection wards in place' Damien told himself as he crept out of the fireplace.

Damien waited for a minute or so before making his way upstairs. His heart was thumping madly and Damien couldn't stop his legs shaking in excitement as he slowly and quietly made his way up to the first floor. He prayed Harry was in his room and the door was not locked. If Harry was moved to another room then Damien would have no chance of finding him since his mum had taken the map to the Black manor from him.

Damien stood in front of Harry's room. His heart was going to thump its way out of his chest. Damien forced out a ragged breath. He placed one of his hands on the doorknob and gave it a small twist. The door clicked open and Damien almost cried out in joy.

'This is it. I'm finally going to be able to meet my older brother' Damien thought to himself as he slowly cracked the door open. He poked his head into the room, still under his invisibility cloak. The room was empty.

Damien pulled himself into the room and closed the door behind him softly. He looked around the room properly. There was no one in the room. Damien slipped the cloak off and let it drop onto the floor.

'Bollocks!' Damien cursed under his breath.

Damien couldn't believe his luck. After all that planning and scheming, after all the risk Damien under took he still didn't get to meet Harry. Damien almost cried in disappointment. He was about to pick up his cloak and leave when he noticed a few items scattered on the desk in the far corner. Out of morbid curiosity, Damien made his way over to the desk. He saw many books scattered across the desk and many quills and parchments. There was a Hogwarts school robe thrown over the back of the chair as well.

Damien picked up a book that was lying open and turned it over to read the front cover. 'Dark Arts and Forbidden Curses'. It didn't look like a textbook for Advanced Defence Against the Dark Arts. Damien

wondered who gave Harry such a book and began flipping through the pages. It contained instructions on what looked like really complex and difficult spells and wand work. Damien started to read the first couple of lines out of curiosity when he suddenly felt a hand grab his shoulder and spin him around.

Damien let go of the book instantly and turned around to come face-to-face with a very angry looking Harry. Damien just looked into the face of his brother. He felt paralysed with shock. He watched numbly as Harry let go of Damien's shoulder and give him a calculating look. Harry burned his emerald eyes into hazel ones before asking,

“Who the hell are you?”

[illegible]

Chapter Sixteen

Damien stood staring at Harry. 'Merlin, he looks just like dad' he thought to himself. Although he had only seen his dad looking as angry as Harry did right now, only a couple of times in his life. He opened his mouth to answer Harry.

"Um...Hi Harry...I'm Damien."

Harry raised his eyebrows at Damien and replied in a cold tone.

"That's supposed to mean something to me?"

Damien blushed. Of course, his parents had taken thirteen years to tell Damien about Harry, they were not going to tell Harry about Damien in only one week.

"Sorry, well I guess there isn't any other way to tell you this so...um...I'm Damien Potter, your...your brother." Damien finished lamely.

Damien wished he had thought this through. He had planned the entire 'coming to headquarters' part of the plan but had not spared a thought as to what he was actually going to say to Harry.

Damien watched as his revelation caused a look of genuine shock to appear in Harry's eyes. It was only for a moment though as Harry quickly replaced the look of shock into anger again.

Harry took a step closer to the boy and hissed at him.

"I'm not your brother!"

Damien was stunned at this. He had been told by his parents and by his godfather that Harry didn't consider himself as part of the Potter family but Damien had thought that they were just over reacting. However now Damien realised how much damage was done to Harry and it was apparent that their relationship was going to need a lot of work. Damien took a deep breath and answered Harry.

"Just cause you feel like that doesn't make it true."

Harry just looked at Damien. He couldn't believe the nerve of this kid. Harry continued to stare at Damien for another moment before turning away from him. Harry started gathering his books and spare quills. He figured ignoring the kid would work the best. Hopefully he would go away. Harry felt that blasting him from the room might not work as he was in no mood to hear another long lecture from the Potters.

Damien watched as Harry picked up his belongings and walked over to the bed. Damien noticed a small trunk sitting at the base of the bed. 'How did I miss that' Damien thought to himself before walking over to Harry.

"Harry, don't you think we should talk?"

Harry gritted his teeth. He hated it when anyone told him what he should do. He turned around to face this kid.

"No I don't think we should talk, since we have nothing to talk about so why don't you be a good little boy and sod off."

Instead of being hurt or insulted, Damien's face broke into a huge grin. Harry seemed taken aback.

"Be a 'good little boy', oh man, that is so not me. If you think that's what I'm like then you're in for a real surprise." Damien chuckled.

Harry was now turning a delicate shade of pink as his suppressed rage was beginning to boil.

"Listen kid! I'm not in the best of moods right now, so if you value your life you'd get the hell out of here!" Harry's voice shook from the anger coursing through him.

Damien just laughed again, causing Harry to barely stop himself from throttling the boy.

"Merlin Harry, I'm only three years younger than you and you're calling me 'kid'. You can just call me 'Damy' like everyone else does."

Harry had heard enough. He walked over to the boy and grabbed him from his upper arm and dragged the stunned boy to the door. Harry yanked the door open and pushed the boy out before slamming the door closed. Harry had only made it to his bed when the door opened and Damien walked in again, with a huge grin across his face.

Harry growled in a way that would have made Sirius proud.

"Maybe you didn't understand that little gesture so let me explain it clearly to you, GET OUT OF MY ROOM!" Harry shouted.

Damien looked at Harry and if possible his smile got even wider. Harry was convinced at this point that there was something seriously wrong with this boy.

"Are you mentally impaired in some way or are you just doing this to annoy me?" Harry asked through clenched teeth.

"No, it's just, well that was a very big brotherly thing to say." Damien replied still grinning stupidly at Harry.

At Harry's confused look Damien explained,

"You know the whole 'get out of my room' and 'sod off' thing. It's just the kind of thing a big brother would say."

Harry was looking at Damien as if he had sprouted horns on his head.

"You're barking mad!" Harry told the thirteen year old. Damien just shrugged and replied.

"Maybe, but I'm right you know, about the big brother thing."

Harry tore his gaze away from the 'crazy boy' in his room and continued packing his belongings into the small trunk. Damien came and stood next to Harry.

"Can't you take a hint Potter, I want you to leave." Harry spoke without looking at the teen standing next to him.

Damien just ignored Harry's instructions and pointed at the pile of books and quills lying on the bed.

"What are you doing with all this stuff?"

Harry stopped his packing and turned around to face Damien.

"It's none of your business what I'm doing. Now are you going to leave or am I going to have to throw you out again?"

Damien was not taking Harry seriously and that was really starting to annoy Harry. Damien cocked his head to one side and looked at Harry.

"You know you're not at all what I expected." he said quietly.

Harry raised his eyebrows.

"Really! And what was it you expected?" Harry asked.

"Well, with all the stories I heard about the Dark Prince, I figured you would be more, I don't know, aggressive." Damien finished while still staring at Harry's face.

Harry thought he had misheard him.

"What? More aggressive? You think I've been nice to you so far. What's wrong with you?" Harry was seriously contemplating the fact that this kid was not right in the head.

"No, you've not been nice but you've not been completely horrible either. I mean all you've done is shouted at me and kicked me out of the room. You could have done a lot worse, like physically hurt me." Damien had a small smile on his face as Harry realised what the kid had just done.

Damien had been unintentionally annoying Harry and had realised that the so called Dark Prince hadn't lashed out or hurt him. Harry had just been inadvertently tested and Harry knew he had been caught out.

"I don't hurt kids." Harry said defiantly.

"So I've heard." Damien replied, he was obviously referring to the rescue of Madame Pomfrey's children.

Before Harry could respond there was a loud knock on the door. Damien actually jumped in fright and ran to the cloak lying on the ground. As Harry watched the teen fumbled around with it and threw it on. Harry was amazed to see the kid seemingly vanish into thin air.

'Cool cloak' Harry thought as he saw the door open and James and Lily walked into the room. Harry gave them a scowl and turned his back to them, completely ignoring them. Harry continued packing the rest of his belongings. He heard James approach behind him. Harry turned around to look at him.

"So, is that you got everything packed?" James asked and Harry mentally cringed to hear the fake enthusiasm in his voice.

"Everything I need." Harry replied and walked around James to make his way to the bathroom.

Underneath the cloak, Damien watched nervously as Harry walked around his dad and disappeared into another room. 'Oh so that's where he was when I came in' thought Damien.

Harry reappeared a moment later carrying several small vials. They looked like dreamless sleeping potion and some pain relief potion. Damien watched as Harry added them to his trunk. Damien hoped Harry wouldn't give Damien away. He really didn't want to get shouted at in front of Harry.

He watched as his mum and dad approached Harry and his dad put a hand on Harry's shoulder, signalling for him to stop packing. Harry stopped and turned around with a bored look on his face.

"Harry, we need to talk to you?" Lily said in a small voice. Harry just ignored her and went back to his packing.

“Harry, please give us just a few minutes then we can help you pack the rest of your stuff.” James said. At once Harry turned to look at him with a glare.

“I’ve already said I don’t need your help. I don’t need *anything* from you. I can look after myself and I can do my own packing.” Harry spat back at his stunned looking parents.

Damien was astonished at the tone Harry was using to speak to their parents. He certainly didn’t use that same tone when he was talking to Damien. Harry had been saying unpleasant things to Damien but his tone was nowhere near as harsh as it was now.

James and Lily both seemed to recover from Harry’s words which made Damien think that this was not the first time Harry had spoken to them like this.

“Harry, I never said that you needed anything from us. I was just trying to be helpful. If you can manage everything by yourself then that’s fine. We just wanted to tell you something before we all take off for Hogwarts tomorrow.” James explained.

Harry seemed to surrender and sat down on his bed with a bored expression.

“Well, go on then.” he said to his parents.

James and Lily conjured up two chairs and sat in front of Harry. Damien was slowly edging his way towards the open door. This was his chance to slip out and try and figure a way out of here. He knew that Mr Weasley was due to pay a small visit soon and was planning to floo back to the Burrow with him in the same manner he had arrived. He had almost made it to the door when he heard his name being mentioned by his dad. Damien stopped a foot away from the door and slowly turned around to listen to the conversation happening between his parents and brother.

“We wanted to tell you before now but with everything going on recently, we never got the chance. Harry we wanted to tell you about Damien. You have a brother, Harry.” James stopped here to let Harry have a reaction.

Harry sat there with no visible reaction. His face was completely blank and he didn't say a single word. James and Lily looked at each other uncomfortably. They had thought that they would have gotten some reaction from Harry. Lily continued a little hesitantly.

"Damien's thirteen years old and is going into his third year at Hogwarts. You will meet him tomorrow. He really wanted to meet you before going to Hogwarts but we thought it was best if you met each other at Hogwarts." Lily finished.

Harry looked up and met Lily's green eyes. It made sense now to the raven haired teen. 'That's why the kid had hid under that cloak. He has snuck in here to meet me against his parent's wishes'.

Harry kept quiet and listened to all the things James and Lily told him about Damien. Harry knew that the kid must be listening to this conversation and decided that the opportunity was too good to miss.

"Sounds like a snotty nosed, spoilt, little brat to me." Harry said once James and Lily had finished their little speech on Damien.

Damien wrinkled his nose and glared at Harry, through his invisibility cloak. Damien knew that Harry was saying that now since Harry knew Damien couldn't say anything to defend himself.

James and Lily looked a little stunned to hear Harry describe Damien like that. What had they said about Damien that made Harry come to a conclusion like that?

"Well, he can be a little spoilt, but Damien's a good kid." Lily said trying not to be too confrontational towards Harry. After all Harry was finally reacting to them.

Damien turned his glare on his parents. 'I'm not spoilt!' he thought silently to himself.

"Hmph, a 'good kid', wonder if he would agree with that." Harry said, and this time Harry had a small smile on his lips. James and Lily looked at each other in confusion. 'What was Harry talking about?'

“Well, yeah...um...so, we just wanted to tell you to watch out for Damien. He will probably want to chat to you non stop. He’s kind of excited at having an older brother.” Lily said with a smile on her face.

“You didn’t tell him about me?” Harry asked looking directly at James.

“We had to tell him, but he took it surprisingly well.” James told Harry.

James silently loved the fact that Harry was so responsive to him and Lily today. ‘Wonder why’ he thought but then cast away his doubt. It was enough that Harry was talking to them, no matter what the reason.

“I thought you would warn him to stay away from me, after all it’s not safe.” Harry said with a smirk. Harry’s eyes had a strange sort of gleam in them this time. He looked directly into James’s eyes.

James felt his temper rise, but quickly tried to control it.

“Harry, he’s just a kid. He doesn’t mean any harm. We’ll tell him not to bother you too much but we will not tolerate any violence towards Damien.” James tried not to sound too threatening but this had to be said.

Harry cocked up an eyebrow and leaned back on the bed. He smirked at James before speaking.

“Now Potter, was that a threat? I thought you understood how I felt about threats, and since when did *you* start not tolerating violence?”

James was confused. What was Harry talking about? Just because James was an Auror didn’t mean he actively enjoyed violence. Before James could open his mouth to ask Harry what he meant, a loud crashing noise caused him and Lily to whip around.

Next to the window, there was a large vase that had somehow been knocked over and had smashed spectacularly. James distinctively heard hurried footsteps next to him. It only took him a moment for James to realise what was happening. He stood up quickly and drew out his wand and shouted.

“ACCIO INVISIBILITY CLOAK!”

At once a cloak appeared just in front of the door and zoomed straight into James’s outstretched hand. James and Lily saw their youngest son standing in front of them, looking sheepishly at them.

“Um...hi everyone.” Damien said, with a look that was clear that he was hoping he would live to see tomorrow.

Harry rolled his eyes and looked away from the boy standing at the door.

“Amateur” he muttered softly as James and Lily started shouting uncontrollably at the poor kid.

xxx

One hour later the shouting had still not stopped and Harry was staring to get a headache. They were all in Harry’s room and Damien had been forced to sit in front of his furious parents. Harry had found it very amusing at the beginning but now he was starting to get annoyed. ‘God he didn’t do anything that bad’ Harry thought to himself as he watched James shout at the boy. Harry was finding it hard to tune out the angry voices.

“...never would have expected you to do something so stupid!...the Weasley’s are outraged at your behaviour...you are going to be so sorry!” James’s voice echoed in the large room.

It was the last statement that jerked Harry back from his daze. Harry looked at James’s red face as he continued to threaten the boy with punishments. Harry felt a strange anger bubble inside him. ‘Really enough is enough’ he thought. Harry didn’t even think about why he was feeling angry. James hadn’t threatened him with punishments, why should Harry care what James did with Damien. For a reason unknown to himself Harry pulled himself onto his feet and charged towards the sofa where James and Lily were currently with Damien.

“I think listening to you rant on and on for the last hour should be punishment enough.” Harry said to James.

James, Lily and Damien all looked up at Harry with similar confused expressions on their faces. James was the first to recover.

“Harry, you really don’t have a say in this so please, just stay out of this.”

Harry cocked up an eyebrow at James’s response but didn’t say anything.

James was already finding it difficult to deal with Damien without Harry making him feel guilty. He hated punishing Damien but after the stunt he pulled today, Damien had to be disciplined.

James turned from Harry and looked at Damien. The thirteen year old was still staring at Harry, apparently still in shock that his brother had somewhat stood up for him.

“Damien, I am really disappointed in you. You took an unnecessary risk in coming here. However since all of us are leaving for Hogwarts tomorrow your punishment will be decided afterwards.”

“Dad, I don’t think you’re being very fair. I didn’t take any unnecessary risks in coming here, and it’s really your fault that this happened.” he gestured to his mum and dad.

“If you had just let me see my brother, then I would not have been forced to do this.” Damien had kept quiet and let his father scream at him, but now that it came down to punishments Damien felt he should point out that his parents were responsible for his actions.

James and Lily looked outraged. They stared at Damien unbelievably for a second before shouting at him again. Damien just sighed and resigned himself to accept whatever punishment was going to be thrown his way.

Harry was also staring at Damien. Harry couldn’t believe someone would go through all this just so that they could meet him. When Harry had first seen the boy in his room he had thought that the kid had been sent in by someone. After learning that the kid was his biological brother, Harry had figured that the Potters had sent him, since the adults were having no luck in getting through to Harry. Now

Harry learned the kid had done this all by himself because he *wanted* to meet Harry, well, this just confused him.

Harry watched as James held hands with Lily and stood up.

"I don't want to hear any more arguing from you Damien! Your punishment will be decided tomorrow, now get downstairs." James made to leave the room but was stopped by Harry.

"And how exactly are you going to punish him? What are you going to do? Throw him down from two floors above as well!"

James just stood there gaping at Harry. Lily and Damien looked at Harry and then at James, waiting for a denial on James part. It never came.

"Harry, I already told you. That was an accident. I would never have done something like that intentionally." James tried to explain. Harry just rolled his eyes at James's response. However Damien had quickly stood up and was now facing his father.

"What! You threw Harry down two floors! Why? How could you do something like that?"

Harry was taken aback by Damien's temper. He didn't think the kid would have the nerve to talk to his father like that. However Damien's rage was nothing compared to the rage of the fiery red head, who came around Damien and stood with her hands on her waist, glaring at James. Harry had to suppress a smile when he saw James cower slightly before her.

"You never mentioned that to me James. You said that Harry was injured in battle. You didn't say how or by whom." Lily said in a quiet, but deadly voice.

James looked positively petrified now. He noticeably gulped causing Harry to look away as the urge to laugh was becoming unbearable.

"Well, he, he was injured in battle but, um, it was an accident on my part. Oh, come on Lils, you know I would never hurt someone like that intentionally." James pleaded with his wife.

Lily looked at her husband for a moment and then folded her arms across her chest.

“Tell me what happened.” she ordered as she sat down on the sofa again.

James looked from his wife to his two sons.

“Now! You want me to tell you now?”

“Yes, now!”

James looked at Harry and Damien before turning back towards his wife.

“Don’t you think now isn’t the right time or place?”

Lily looked at James for another moment before standing up and taking James’s hand and guiding him to the door. She stopped and turned around to speak to Damien.

“Damy, I expect you downstairs in two minutes to go back to the Weasleys.”

Damien nodded and gave his mum a smile to show his thanks.

After the parents had left, Damien turned around to face Harry.

“Thanks for that, Harry.” he said with another idiotically big smile.

Harry looked at him in confusion again. Harry didn’t think he had ever been so confused all his life as he had been in the last hour or so with Damien.

“Thanks for what?” Harry asked.

“For standing up for me and for distracting them.” Damien smiled at Harry before coming closer and asking in a near whisper.

“He didn’t really do that to you, did he?”

Harry figured that by 'he' Damien meant 'James' and the 'do that' was the 'being thrown from two floors high'.

Harry smirked and leaned in closer to Damien.

“Of course he did.” he replied.

Damien looked shocked and actually gave an involuntary shudder at the thought of his father hurting his brother like that. Damien and Harry whipped around at the sound of Lily screaming abuse.

“YOU DID WHAT!...FOUR! THERE WERE FOUR OF YOU?...HE COULD HAVE DIED!”

Harry smiled at the thought of the grief that James was going through. Damien turned around and looked curiously at Harry.

Harry at once stopped smiling and glared at Damien.

“Well, what are you waiting for? Get out!”

Damien only smiled back at Harry as he picked up his invisibility cloak and headed towards the door. He stopped at the door and turned to look at Harry.

"I guess I'll be seeing you tomorrow, thanks again, Harry."

“Listen kid, I didn’t stand up for anybody. The only reason I said anything was to annoy the Potters and cause the fight that is happening as we speak, so don’t go around with any funny ideas in your head.” Harry snapped at him.

Damien's smile faltered slightly before he covered it up again. He winked at Harry and said.

“Sure Harry, whatever you say.”

With that Damien left an irate Harry by himself to finish packing for Hogwarts.

XX

Chapter Seventeen

Harry stepped through the fireplace and found himself in Professor Dumbledore's office. The flames behind him turned green once more and James joined him. Harry didn't turn around to acknowledge him. Harry was upset that he wasn't allowed to come to Hogwarts by the train. Not that Harry had any regrets for not riding the Hogwarts Express, no, he was upset because that had been Harry's last hope for escape. He was told only this morning that he was not going to be travelling to Hogwarts by the train. He was going to floo, straight to the Headmaster's office.

Harry brushed the soot away from his cloak and stared at the office. Harry was trying his best not to look interested in the décor of the office, however this was difficult as he had never seen anything quite like this before. Harry observed the many, many portraits of the previous Headmasters. Most of them were pretending to be asleep, even though it was only around 7pm. Harry examined the strange looking instruments that were littering the Headmaster's desk along with different assortments of confectionary. 'He must be something like a hundred and fifty and he still eats sweets' Harry thought to himself.

"Actually, Harry, I am only One hundred and forty seven years old." came a voice from behind Harry.

Harry turned around to see Albus Dumbledore in dark blue robes with a matching hat. He stood by the door smiling serenely at Harry. Harry was momentarily stunned. 'How did he...he must be able to perform Legimens!' Instantly Harry brought up his mind shields. Harry wasn't very good at performing Occulmency, but he did the best he could. It unnerved Harry to no end that Dumbledore might be able to read his thoughts.

Dumbledore smiled at Harry and walked calmly over to his desk. He sat down on his chair and motioned with his hand for James and Harry to take a seat as well. Harry sat down reluctantly and purposely looked away from the Headmaster. Dumbledore leaned forward and picked up a bowl of lemon drops and offered it to Harry. The disgusted look that he received from the raven haired teen almost

had Dumbledore laughing. He chuckled to himself and sat back in his chair.

“So Harry, I hope you were not too disappointed with not arriving by the Hogwarts Express. I am sure that next year you will be able to travel here by the train. It really is a pleasure that every wizard and witch should experience.”

Harry completely ignored him and stared out of the window. He could see the huge castle grounds, the magnificent lake and the dark grounds which must lead into the Forbidden forest. Draco had told Harry many stories about that forest, including the time he was viciously attacked by a Hippogriff.

Harry smiled, despite himself. Harry was really angry at being brought to this school and being kept here as a prisoner. However a very small part of him was actually excited at being at Hogwarts. After years of hearing stories about the school, Harry had always imagined what the school must have been like, after all his own father, Lord Voldemort, had attended this very school. Harry hated himself for feeling like this. He should not be happy or excited at being here and promised himself he was not going to let Hogwarts affect him.

Dumbledore saw the small smile spread on Harry's lips and felt pride surge through him. Hogwarts really did bring happiness to everyone who came to it. Harry however was quick to mask his feelings and turned around to glare at the Headmaster.

“I am sure you understand the conditions set against you. You will obey and follow all the school rules like everyone else. You will not disclose your past to any student and if you cause any trouble to any teachers or students you will be punished accordingly.”

Harry's eyes flared up at once at the mention of punishments. He rose out of his chair and leaned against the table so that his face was inches away from the Headmasters.

“Punishments? I don't think so! I will do whatever the hell I want. I will treat whoever like I want and there isn't much you can do to me and you know it!” Harry hissed venomously at Dumbledore.

James was instantly on his feet and was ready to withdraw his wand in case Harry attacked Dumbledore. But Harry merely sat back down after having his outburst and continued glaring at the Headmaster.

Dumbledore didn't look affected by Harry's words at all and continued speaking as if there had been no interruptions.

"You will attend all classes that are assigned to you and you will share a dormitory with your fellow classmates."

Anger flared in Harry once more.

"Share? Oh I don't think so. I don't share anything, Dumbledore." Harry was more than surprised at James when he started to object to Harry sharing as well.

"Dumbledore, I don't think that this is a good idea. Harry should have somewhere else to stay, where he is alone." James seemed uncomfortable with saying what was on his mind clearly.

James didn't want Harry sharing because of the danger that would put the fellow students under. James didn't understand why Dumbledore would want to undertake such a risk. Dumbledore however simply smiled at both James and Harry.

"James, I assure you that everything will be fine, now I think it is time for the Great Feast, so both of you, please join me in the Great Hall."

James stood up as Dumbledore rose out of his chair. James still felt very unsure about Harry sharing a dorm with other children but he wasn't in a position to do anything about it. However Harry remained seated and looked at the towering figures standing over him.

"Harry, please come with us." Dumbledore said softly to the teen.

Harry stood up and faced the Headmaster, hatred plainly shown on his face.

"I am not hungry, so if you'll just point out my prison cell, I'll just make my way there."

James looked at Harry and felt his temper rise. 'Why does he make things so difficult' he thought to himself.

"Harry, you've not had anything proper to eat all day, I think you should at least have some dinner before calling it a night." James tried telling the stubborn teen.

"I don't really give a hoot about what you think Potter, just show me the damn room!"

Before James could stop himself he shouted.

"Fine! If this is how you're going to behave, like a spoilt child then that's exactly how we're going to treat you!"

James turned to Dumbledore.

"Where are you placing him?" he asked a little heatedly.

"Where else? Gryffindor of course." Dumbledore answered with a smile.

Harry stood up abruptly. Harry was sure that he was going to be sorted by the crazy old sorting hat that Draco had described. Furthermore he was convinced that he would be sorted into Slytherin. Especially since he was Slytherin's heir it would only make sense.

"What? You're going to put me in Gryffindor! You know as well as I do that's not where I belong." Harry shouted at Dumbledore

"No, Harry, Gryffindor is your true ancestry line, it is where you truly belong." Dumbledore answered calmly.

"I am the Slytherin heir, I should be in Slytherin." Harry was finding it difficult to speak due to so much rage.

"You are also the heir to Gryffindor, and pardon me for sounding a little childish but, you were Gryffindor's heir first, before you become Slytherin's heir." Dumbledore was definitely patronising Harry now.

Harry crossed his arms over his chest and just glared at Dumbledore. The Headmaster turned around and gave James the password to get into the Gryffindor common room and told James which dorm was Harry's.

Harry just ignored the two men and walked towards the door. Once Harry reached the door he turned around and addressed Dumbledore one final time that day.

"Place me wherever the hell you like Dumbledore, I'm still going to be a Slytherin through and through."

Dumbledore merely smiled and answered.

"Goodnight Harry."

James was instantly by Harry's side leading him out the Headmaster's office and up to the Gryffindor common room. Harry walked quietly and didn't even bother examining his surroundings. He was too angry to look at anything at the moment. 'How could that old fool put me into Gryffindor, that was the worst thing he could have done to me!' thought Harry. Before long Harry found himself facing of a huge portrait of an immensely fat lady in an awful pink, frilly dress.

Harry wrinkled his nose, looking disgusted with the portrait. 'Merlin even their portrait is so vile looking, Slytherin's must be much better than this'

James gave the password 'wimblemodia' and stepped through the hole that was revealed as the portrait swung open. Harry came into a room that was bathed in the colours red and gold. Harry looked around the comfortable looking room, with a huge fireplace, comfy looking chairs and sofas. Harry didn't want to compliment anything belonging to Gryffindor, so he disguised his face into a look of repulsion as he faced James.

James was looking around at the common room with a look of joy on his face.

"God, how I missed this place." he muttered quietly. James hadn't meant for Harry to hear him but Harry did. 'Now I have another

reason to hate Gryffindor.' Harry thought as he was led up a spiral staircase. If Potter had been in Gryffindor then it was definitely the house Harry wanted out of. He entered the boys dormitory and found himself being led to the nearest one.

Harry stepped into the room and found a large room with five four poster beds, and five wardrobes in the room. Harry's trunk had been brought into the room and was now sitting next to the bed, nearest the window. Harry spun around to face James.

"Here! I have to stay here. This room is tiny, and I have to share with no less than four other boys! What are you trying to do to me?"

James couldn't help the laugh that escaped him. Harry turned another shade of pink as he eyed James dangerously.

"Sorry, Harry couldn't help that. Look, the room isn't tiny and you're only going to be sleeping in it. Most of the time you'll be going to classes and whatever free time you have will be spent in the common room."

James was finding Harry's tantrum quite entertaining. For a moment Harry seemed like a normal child, complaining about sharing and others taking over his space. James smiled at the angry teen.

"Harry are you sure you don't want any dinner? You really should have something to eat." James was longing to reach out to Harry. The teen looked positively cute sulking like that. He wanted to push the unruly black hair away from Harry's eyes and to look into those brilliant emerald greens. James wanted to embrace Harry in the way he used to when Harry was a baby.

James knew that Harry would only get upset if he did anything like that, so he decided to put a hand on Harry's shoulder in a comforting way. Harry immediately flinched away from James and moved away from his reach.

James sighed and walked towards the door. He turned one last time at the door and saw Harry pull his trunk open and was starting to rummage through it. James muttered a quiet good night and left Harry in his dorm room.

Harry heard the good night but just ignored it like he was ignoring the Potters very existence. He sighed loudly and pulled out the pyjamas that Harry had been given by the Potters. For now Harry had no choice but to accept whatever the Potters had given him. Lily had gone shopping, when she went to Diagon Alley to collect Harry's school supplies. Harry looked at the blue striped pyjamas and pulled another disgusted face. 'Well you have no other alternative Harry, so just get it over with' he thought to himself. He quickly changed and crept into his four poster bed. He pulled the drapes around his bed and tried to go to sleep. Harry tried not to feel too miserable about being forced into the Gryffindor house. He had expected himself to be sorted into Slytherin. At least he would have had Draco there with him.

Harry was feeling very apprehensive at meeting hundreds of children. This was partly the reason Harry has skipped the great feast. The longer Harry could put it off the better. Harry was feeling very angry at being sorted into Gryffindor. His father had always teased Harry by saying things like, 'Harry, your fighting style is too Gryffindor' or 'that was a very Gryffindor thing to do' if Harry had done something particularly stupid. Harry knew of his Gryffindor heritage from the Potters but that didn't make Harry accept it any better. Harry wanted to be a pure Slytherin, and his father would always playfully annoy Harry by reminding him of his *other* heritage.

Harry felt his stomach rumble with hunger. Harry turned to his side in an effort to get comfortable and sleep. He knew from experience that sleeping on an empty stomach was not possible for very long. However his pride was getting in the way of him asking for food. 'Damn my Gryffindor pride!' Harry thought miserably as sleep finally came to him and claimed him.

xxx

Ron, Neville, Dean and Seamus made their way to their dormitory. Ron was the most awake from the four boys trudging their way upstairs. He had been told by Professor Dumbledore, before the feast, about their fifth dorm member. Ron cursed softly under his breath. Professor Dumbledore had asked Ron to make sure everyone was nice to Harry and to make sure that no one found out Harry's past. Ron didn't think anything short of a miracle could pull off this stunt but

had just smiled and nodded his head at the Headmaster. He had confided in Hermione later though. 'He's bloody mental he is' Ron had whispered to the bushy haired girl as they led the first years to the dormitory. Hermione had shushed him instantly and had said that if Professor Dumbledore had so much faith in Harry then everyone else should respect that and listen to one of the most powerful and wise wizard to have ever lived. Ron had then kept his mouth shut, since fighting with Hermione would only mean that Ron would have to take his own notes tomorrow in Transfiguration.

The four boys went into the room and saw the hangings pulled around a fifth bed. The boys shared a curious look. Ron had mentioned a little about a transfer student from another school abroad. He had mentioned that he was Damien's older brother who, for security reasons, had been moved abroad when he was very little. 'Well it is true to a certain extent' the red head had thought to himself. Harry may not have been living abroad but he had been living in a completely different world than most kids his age. The boys whispered among themselves as they got ready for bed.

"Should we have a little peek?"

"No he'll wake up and will probably get mad for us looming over him."

"Oh come on, just a peek. I want to see what he looks like."

Ron heard the silent argument between the three boys. He was really curious as to what Harry looked like as well. When Damien had arrived at the Burrow last night he had tried to explain as much he could about Harry. Damien had said that Harry was a carbon copy of his dad. Ron felt his curiosity take over him. Ignoring the potential danger ahead, Ron crept up to the bed and was joined by the other three boys. Very slowly and as quietly as he could, Ron pulled the hangings surrounding the sleeping boy. The room was dark but the moonlight shining outside gave the needed amount of light. Ron and the other three boys couldn't see the boy's face as he had his back towards them. Before the four boys could creep away a voice made them jump a foot in the air.

"If you guys want to keep your eyes you better stop staring at me."

It took a moment or two for the four boys to realise it was Harry who had spoken. The teen had not even turned around to look at them, but spoke with his back still turned towards them. Ron hastily muttered a 'Sorry' and tugged the hangings closed again. He and the other boys shared a nervous look before going to their respective beds.

Harry heard one of the boys whisper to another, 'Merlin, he seems a bit aggressive'. Harry smiled 'You have no idea.' he thought to himself as he drifted back to sleep.

xxx

Harry awoke the next morning as he heard some commotion around him. It took Harry a moment to remember where he was. He had actually had slept quite well last night. Something he had not been able to do since his capture. Harry got up and pulled his hangings open to see that most of the boys in the room were up and were sleepily getting dressed. Harry felt his stomach flip over as he thought about sharing the room with these boys. Harry slowly got up and pulled himself onto his feet. Nobody had noticed him yet. Harry started pulling his school robes out of his trunk and decided to go to the bathroom to change. As he turned around to make his way out he came face to face with a red haired boy. Harry didn't even have to guess who this was. He had heard enough about the Weasley boys from his best friend Draco. He had figured that this one must be the youngest Weasley, Ronald, as Harry knew that the youngest Weasley was the same age as him and Draco.

Harry smirked at the look of discomfort that crossed the red haired boy's face. Ron couldn't even look at Harry in the eyes. Harry had figured that Ron must be one of the few students Dumbledore had informed about Harry's past. Ron seemed to find his voice as he took a step towards Harry. He stuck out his hand and was silently willing it to stop shaking.

"Ronald Weasley" he introduced himself to Harry in a somewhat steady voice. Harry ignored the boy's outstretched hand and continued to look into the face before him. Ron lowered his hand, feeling embarrassed and a little angry. Ron was only taking the first

step towards being friendly towards Harry because of Damien. Also he figured that if Harry was going to stay in their dorm room then he should at least try and be friendly to You-Know-Who's adoptive son.

Ron had been taken aback by the strong resemblance Harry had to James Potter. He has been expecting the similarities but it still came as a shock. If it wasn't for the cold looks that were being given by Harry, Ron could have sworn that it was James Potter standing before him in his sixteen year old body. That could be easily believable since the pranks that Sirius and James pulled on each other could very well result in an aging potion been unknowingly consumed. However the brilliant green eyes that were boring into Ron's brown ones, sending chills down Ron's back, was definitely not something James could achieve, even if he tried.

Harry smirked again as the look of embarrassment and anger shot across Ron's face. 'Draco's right, the moron can't hide his emotions at all' Harry thought to himself. The other boys had noticed Ron talking to the new kid but were still too sleepy to introduce themselves.

"Look, if you're annoyed about last night, then I'm sorry. We shouldn't have sneaked up to you, we were just curious to see you, that's all." Ron said quietly.

Harry took a step towards Ron and whispered quietly so only Ron could hear him.

"You know that curiosity can kill, don't you?"

Ron paled a bit as he looked fearfully at Harry. He immediately cast away any further thoughts about being friends with him. 'Dumbledore is wrong about Harry, there is no way Harry can ever be normal or can even have a chance for redemption' Ron thought to himself as he made his way to the door. As far as Ron was concerned, he had tried to be friends with Harry and had failed. He was fine with that.

Harry watched the frightened sixth year almost run to the door and leave without even looking back at him. Harry smiled to himself again 'this is almost too easy, if they freak out over things like this, how are they going to put up with all the other things I plan on doing' Harry

had spent last night thinking about how he was going to make Hogwarts hell for everyone there, except maybe the Slytherins.

Harry started to make his way to the bathroom again but stopped short when another boy came towards him. He also stuck out his hand and introduced himself. Harry however didn't hear him over the loud thumping of his own heart as he stared into the boy's round face and big eyes. Harry felt the air around him vanish as he struggled to breathe. He stared at Neville Longbottom and silently cursed Dumbledore. The old manipulative fool had put Harry in the same room as Neville Longbottom, knowing full well what Harry had done to Neville's parents. Neville smiled and introduced himself again.

"Hi, you must be Harry Potter, I'm Neville Longbottom."

Harry couldn't take it anymore, he side stepped Neville hurriedly and shot through the door before anyone could stop him. Neville stared at the opened door, through which Harry had just ran. "Strange boy that one." he muttered to himself.

Harry felt rage build in him once again. He quickly found the boys bathroom and ran inside, locking the door behind him. Harry leaned against the wall and tried to calm his heart to a normal level. 'How could Dumbledore do that?' Harry thought to himself. Then as Harry calmed down the answer came to him. 'He wants me to feel guilty about what happened!' Harry felt his rage boil again. 'Don't let Dumbledore win' Harry told himself. He gave himself a mental shake and carried himself over to the wash sink. He splashed some water onto his face and tried to calm down again.

If Harry wanted to survive here, he would have to keep his emotions in check. Harry washed up and then quickly pulled his night time clothes off and pulled on his school robes. He gave himself a look over in the mirror.

"I look like an idiot!" he said aloud and tried in vain to settle his messy hair.

"For once, can't you behave?" he asked his messy locks as he tried to push the stubborn hair flat. As if in response to his question the hair that Harry had managed to push flat sprang back up.

“Brilliant” Harry hissed.

It was going to be bad enough with everyone staring at the ‘new kid’ without him looking like a complete moron.

Harry longed for his black robes, dragon skin boots, his armour and more than anything he longed for his silver mask. He was enraged that Potter wouldn’t give Harry his mask back. Potter had burnt it saying that Harry didn’t have to hide anymore. Harry had felt as if a part of him had been destroyed. Harry had worn a mask in front of strangers for years now. Harry thought to himself that if he ever needed to cover his face, it was now. Slowly Harry pushed himself towards the door, as he could hear many voices coming from behind the door, shouting to let them in. Harry opened the door and came face to face with James. There were a few students who rushed past Harry into the bathroom. James looked at Harry in his school robes. James couldn’t help but smile at the raven haired teen in his new image. Harry stepped out of the bathroom and started walking with James. James didn’t talk to Harry until they reached the common room.

“So, Harry. How was your first night in Hogwarts?”

Harry continued walking and didn’t look at James. James tried again.

“You look really good in those school robes, I’d say you look almost like a normal teenager.”

Harry stopped walking and turned to look at James, fury evident in his green orbs. Harry crossed his arms over his chest and spoke in a deadly quiet voice.

“Don’t try and be funny with me Potter! I can’t say much about your sense of humour but it will surely cause you a lot of discomfort if you can’t control it.”

James only smiled back at Harry. James had realised that the only way to deal with Harry would be to treat him like a normal teenager throwing a temper tantrum. He knew that getting upset with Harry wasn’t going to work and that getting himself upset over Harry’s words wasn’t going to help either.

"Come on, Harry, I was being serious. You look really good, considering it is your first day at school." James had to hold in his laugh at the look of embarrassment on Harry's face as he continued to glare at him.

"I mean I remember my first day, and I was much worse of than you. For starters I had the worst pair of spectacles you could imagine. They were huge!" James stopped talking as he looked at Harry closer.

"I meant to ask you this before Harry, um, you...you don't wear glasses?"

"Wow you're observation skills cease to amaze me, say, are you always this brilliant at noticing obvious things?" Harry asked, sarcasm dripping with each word.

James blushed despite himself.

"I meant to ask if it was a spell or if you never needed glasses."

Harry's look of sarcasm vanished and a look of pure loathing covered his handsome face.

"You really are unbelievable, you know that?" Harry hissed at James before turning and walking purposefully towards the portrait door. James caught up with him.

"Harry, what's wrong? I only asked you a simple question."

Harry stopped walking and turned abruptly so he and James were standing with their faces inches apart. James saw the fire of rage burning in Harry's eyes. There was also another emotion hidden in those brilliant green eyes. James wasn't sure but he thought that he could detect some hurt amongst all the hate and anger.

"You want to know Potter, fine let me tell you! My ***father*** fixed my poor vision. Now I don't need anything for my vision. My father *perfected* it for me!" Harry was breathing a little heavily, due to the anger James had brought out of him.

James was utterly bewildered. Why did Harry react to his question like that? James tried not to get upset over Harry calling Voldemort 'father'. However the hurt must have shown on James' face because Harry gave a triumphant smirk and turned and raced out of the common room before James had recovered from Harry's words.

xxx

Ginny was late for breakfast. Why Ginny couldn't have waited until after classes to go to the library was beyond her own comprehension. 'Maybe every one is right, I am obsessed with him!' she thought as she hurried along to the Great Hall for breakfast. If she was late she would miss the timetables being given out and then she would have to explain her absence to Professor McGonagall. Ginny had woken up pretty early and couldn't think of anything else to do but to continue her search for her mysterious saviour. Ginny was starting to lose hope of ever finding any information about him from their school library. Ginny was too engrossed in her own thoughts to have noticed a raven haired boy rushing down the stairs. Both teens collided with each other rather forcefully and were knocked to the ground.

Ginny sat up immediately and opened her mouth to hurl abuse at whoever was blind enough not to have seen her coming. However her words were caught in her throat as her eyes met brilliant green ones. Ginny could only sit on the floor of the main hallway, staring at the messy haired boy in front of her. His amazing green eyes were shining in the exact way her mysterious saviour's had.

Harry looked at the red haired girl sitting in front of him. Harry had recognised her instantly but kept a neutral face. He didn't want her to recognise him, not that she would since she hadn't seen his face that night. 'Probably doesn't even remember the incident' thought Harry to himself. Harry had always thought that most people were quite selfish like that.

Harry picked himself up from the floor and noticed that the girl was staring at him. Ginny came out of her stupor at noticing the boy standing up. She made to stand up as well but gasped in pain when her knee objected to her movement. The words left Harry before he could catch himself.

“Are you okay?”

Ginny froze as she heard the boy's voice. She had spent a lot of time thinking about a voice similar to this, even these exact words. Ginny felt her heart thumping madly inside her. ‘This is it, it's him! It must be, the eyes, the voice it must be him’ Ginny felt her excitement bubble inside her. She quickly got to her feet, ignoring the pain shooting up her leg.

“Um, yeah, I-I'm fine.” Ginny wished her voice would stop shaking.

“Sorry about that, I wasn't looking where I was going.” Ginny continued. ‘Great, now he's going to think I'm a careless idiot who's so blind she can't even see where she's going’ Ginny scolded herself.

“No, its okay I wasn't looking where I was going either, you okay though?” Harry asked as he saw the red haired girl wince as she tried to straighten herself up.

Ginny was now convinced that her search was over. Those brilliant green eyes! They were definitely the same eyes that had looked at her in concern when she had fallen from the roof. Ginny was almost close to hysteria, she had at last found him, but why did he not recognise her?

“I'm sorry but do I know you from somewhere?” Ginny started to say, knowing full well where they had met. Before Harry could respond he heard a shout come from the stairs.

“Harry! Where do you think you're going?”

Ginny turned around to see James Potter coming down the stairs, trying not to bump into the students hurrying to the Great Hall. Ginny turned around in time to see the raven haired boy glare at James and his handsome features were suddenly twisted in a very angry scowl.

It took Ginny a moment or two to put everything together, James Potter had just addressed this boy as ‘Harry’ and that was what the Dark Prince was called, wasn't he. Ginny looked at the boy standing in front of her. She realised that he was very similar looking to James Potter, or as Damien had put it ‘he's a bloody carbon copy of dad!’

She felt her blood run cold as understanding dawned on her. He was Harry Potter! The Dark Prince, the one responsible for many deaths and destruction. Ginny felt suddenly lost again as she realised that she had been wrong. Her mysterious saviour couldn't be Harry Potter. Her saviour had rescued her from *Harry's* men.

Ginny watched as James approached Harry and the two Potters just looked at each other.

"Why did you run off like that?" James asked while Harry only glared at him and turned his attention back to Ginny.

Harry was surprised to see the abrupt change in the girls behaviour towards him. One minute she was looking at Harry with so much awe and wonderment, the next she was giving him cold glares. 'What's this all about' Harry wondered.

"So you're Harry Potter?" Ginny asked coldly, while scolding herself for allowing herself to get so caught up with her imagination. How could she not have seen Harry's close resemblance to James Potter?

"Actually it's just Harry." the raven haired teen replied now eyeing the fiery red head with interest.

James only noticed Ginny when she spoke to Harry. He turned his head towards her and managed to give her a small smile.

"Morning, Ginny."

"Morning, Mr Potter." Ginny smiled back at James.

James looked between the two teens and realised the both were in the middle of a conversation with each other, when he had arrived.

"Do...do you know each other?" James asked, knowing that that was not a possibility.

Ginny bent low to pick up her bag, that was still lying abandoned on the floor. She straightened up and threw another cold glare at Harry.

“No, I just thought he was someone else, but I was obviously wrong.” Ginny said in a quiet voice, still glaring at the boy responsible for causing so much pain to others.

Harry was surprised by the girl’s mood swings. He examined the girl’s face once more before responding.

“Yeah, I guess you were mistaken, I couldn’t possibly know someone like you.” Harry gave the girl one of his trademark smirks.

Ginny managed not to scowl at him as she brushed pass him and hurried to the Great Hall, cursing the Dark Prince under her breath. She was now running late for breakfast.

Harry watched her leave and couldn’t help but feel a pang of annoyance at her. ‘Why was she being so nice to me and then suddenly decided to throw me cold glares’ Harry thought to himself.

James was watching Harry closely.

“Harry, what happened in the common room? Why did you get so angry with me over a simple question?”

Harry didn’t look at James. Instead he turned around and made his way towards the Great Hall.

“Harry...”

“Potter, I’m hungry and I just want some decent food so that I can get through the torture you have in store for me today, okay.”

James was once again stung by Harry’s words. He felt his patience leave him.

“Okay Harry, but tell me how were you planning on getting anything to eat if you don’t even know the way to breakfast?”

Harry turned to face the Auror, an exasperated look on his face and pointed at the steady stream of students going to the Great Hall for breakfast.

Chapter Eighteen

Harry stood frozen at the entrance of the Great Hall. His heart thumped madly as he surveyed the thousands of children sitting and chatting, happily eating their breakfast and greeting one another after the summer break. Harry had never seen so many children in all his life. He was suddenly more aware of his messy hair and his uncomfortable school robes. He stood, rooted to the spot.

James came and stood next to his son, trying to understand what Harry must be going through. Harry didn't even notice James.

"Come on, Harry, the Gryffindor table is this one here." James pointed to the table furthest to the right.

Harry started walking over to the table. Harry could feel all the eyes on him as he walked towards the Gryffindor table. Harry quickly sat down at a place which was as far away from everyone as possible. James left Harry at the table and made his own way towards the staff table, to join an anxious looking Lily.

Harry kept his eyes firmly on the empty plate in front of him. He could feel the students around him staring at him and Harry wished they would stop. It unnerved him to no end. Harry sighed and reached over and took some toast and began to lazily eat it. His throat felt tight for some reason. Harry would never admit it openly but he was nervous at being around so many children. Harry didn't get nervous easily. Harry had duelled with and even killed many Death Eaters, not to mention all his encounters with the Ministry and Order Aurors, and never once did he feel nervous or uncertain of his actions. Yet here he was in the midst of children and Harry felt immensely tense. Harry knew it only because he was in unknown territory. When Harry was sent on an assignment he knew what was expected of him, what he needed to do, how to act. However he was now in a situation that he didn't have any control over.

Harry sighed as he tried to clear his head. First thing was first. He had to find Draco. He had to send a message to his father. Harry chanced a glance over to the other tables. He spotted the blonde haired Slytherin sitting at the table furthest away from him. It was obvious that the enmity between the two houses was such that the

two tables belonging to the houses had to be situated as far away from one another as possible. Harry watched as Draco talked to a small group of boys and one girl. Draco was not looking in Harry's direction. The blonde boy was too busy talking to his friends. Harry smiled despite himself. 'What is Draco going to say when he sees me here?' Harry thought to himself.

Harry had just turned back to his breakfast when a sudden movement in front of him caused Harry to look up. Damien had just seated himself in front of Harry.

"Morning Harry!" Damien said in a cheery voice.

Harry growled at him in response.

"So, what do you think of Hogwarts? It's pretty cool, don't you think? Wait till you see all of it, well technically that's impossible, due to the sheer size of it, but the parts that you'll see will amaze you! Then there are the Hogwarts grounds as well..." Damien stopped when he saw Harry put his fingers on each side of his head and began rubbing his temples.

"Can't you go annoy someone else?" Harry asked the younger teen wearily.

"Harry, you're new here. Someone needs to tell you all about Hogwarts. Why not me?" Damien asked as he gave Harry another dazzling smile.

Harry sighed and let Damien drone on and on about Hogwarts. Harry knew ignoring him probably wouldn't work but there wasn't really anything Harry could do right now. He looked at his half eaten toast. He had lost his appetite. Harry looked over at the staff table and saw James and Lily watching them closely. Harry smiled to himself. 'Time for a little Potter distress' Harry thought.

Harry leaned closer to Damien and beckoned for Damien to come closer. Damien stopped talking and leaned in, curious to hear what Harry wanted to say.

"Alright kid, how about you give me a tour then?"

Damien looked at Harry for a second.

“Seriously?” Damien asked, looking very excited.

Why not, someone’s got to do it, why not you?” Harry replied, mirroring Damien’s earlier words.

“Alright then! Oh, but we can’t go right now. McGonagall will be handing out the timetables soon.” Damien said looking a little disappointed with the lack of time they had.

“Well why don’t you show me the way to the boy’s room? Since I need a little visit before classes start anyway.”

Damien nodded his head and both boys got up and quickly made their way to the exit.

James leaped out of his chair and tried to rush towards Harry and Damien. He and Lily had been watching Harry and Damien talking and James was getting a little restless. He remembered what Harry had said when James had first told him about Damien. Harry had a strange look in his eyes that day and that had unsettled James. After all, James knew what damage Harry could do, even without a wand. He didn’t want Damien, or any other kid to be alone with Harry. However James was finding it difficult to get through the crowd of the seventh year students that had just rushed into the hall. He saw Harry and Damien near the door, they had somehow managed to slip past the seventh years. James saw Harry turn around and looked directly at him, as he and Damien reached the door. Harry smirked and winked at James before disappearing out the hall.

James felt his blood run cold. What was that for? What did Harry plan on doing to Damien? Surely Harry wouldn’t dare hurt Damien right under James and Lily’s nose, Right?

By the time James pushed his way through the crowd and entered the main hallway, Harry and Damien were nowhere to be seen. James started panicking and scolding himself. Why had James taken so long to leave the staff table? Why did he not approach the table as soon as Damien had sat down opposite Harry?

James took out his wand and whispered,

“Point me!”

His wand spun around but kept pointing in all different directions, left, right, left again, straight ahead, right. James cursed under his breath. It seemed the ‘point me’ spell didn’t work in Hogwarts for obvious security reasons. He looked desperately towards the left and right. They had to be around here somewhere, where could they have gone? How could Damien be so stupid? James intended on giving Damien a thorough telling off, if he could find him first. James started running to his right, palms slightly sweaty, thumping heart and shaky legs carried him forward. James was having a panic attack. Harry had to be doing something horrible to Damy, James could feel it.

Just as James was going to turn a corner he heard the familiar voice behind him.

“...and there’s a boys room on all the floors, but the girls room is on only four floors, what can I say it seems unfair but that’s just the way it is.”

James spun around and saw Damien and Harry coming out of the boy’s bathroom and walking towards the Great Hall again.

“Why the hell would I want to know how many girl bathrooms there are?” Harry asked a little resignedly.

James felt like he could collapse on the floor with relief. ‘The bathroom! Of course, Damien was just showing Harry the boys room’ James felt a little embarrassed over his panic attack. Harry wouldn’t hurt Damien while he was stuck at Hogwarts, Harry wasn’t that irrational, well James hoped not anyway.

James made his way over to the two boys and suppressed the desire to hug Damien.

“Dad? What are you doing here?” Damien asked as he spotted his father walking quickly towards him.

James reached his two sons and felt lost for words, what was he supposed to say 'I thought Harry was taking you away to murder you!' James felt embarrassment rush through him again. Harry also looked at the pale figure standing before him. Harry smiled in triumph as he took in James' worried face. Damien also noticed his father's pale complexion and the tiny beads of sweat on his forehead.

"Dad, what's wrong? You don't look too good." Damien asked again.

"Nothing Dady, I'm fine...um...where did you two disappear of to?" James hoped his voice sounded casual.

"Just showing Harry around, you know before classes start." Damien said still looking at his father in a worried way.

"Yeah Potter, what did you think I was doing?" Harry asked in a casual way, but James caught the sneer that was disguised in the comment. Harry had purposely freaked James out. He had played James and James had fallen for it without hesitation.

James wished he had remained at the staff table. He only gave Harry a warning look and started ushering the boys back to the Great Hall.

Once they were back inside the hall and were seated once again, James returned to his seat. Lily gave a look of relief as she saw her two sons sitting safely in front of her.

Just then all the head of houses began handing out timetables to everyone in their houses. Professor McGonagall only stopped beside Harry for a moment before continuing. Harry had taken the timetable and had stuffed it into his pocket without even looking at it. What was the point? He was going to be escorted to all his classes by Potter anyway, just let him remember the timetable for classes.

Harry noticed two giggling girls staring at Harry. He looked over at them and noticed that by now the entire Gryffindor table was eyeing him suspiciously. Damien quickly started introducing all of them to Harry. Harry kept quiet and didn't even return many hellos'. Harry noticeably winced when Damien introduced him as 'Harry Potter'. At once questions came from all sides. Many asked where Harry was all these years. Why he was secretly moved abroad? Harry watched as

Damien answered all of them, even though most questions were directed at Harry. One sixth year asked "he's not a mute is he?"

Harry moved forward, wanting to break the cheeky Gryffindor's mouth but Damien sent a pleading look at Harry and for some reason Harry backed down. Maybe it was because Damien had unknowingly helped him in freaking out James. Harry glared at the Gryffindor boy as Damien quickly replied "Shut up David, Harry's just got a sore throat, that's all."

The two giggling girls approached Harry and one of them asked.

"Harry, how come you weren't at the feast yesterday?"

'Merlin can they be nosier?' thought Harry.

"I didn't feel like it." he answered still not looking at them, hoping that they would just piss off.

However the two girls stared giggling again talking with other girls around them. Harry caught whispers of

'Lovely voice...gorgeous eyes ...he's so hot!'

Harry jerked back to look at the two girls who were now laughing hard. Harry noticed that almost every girl at that table was looking Harry with the same sort of strange gleam in their eyes. Harry sighed, 'stupid girls!'

Harry stood up from the table and instantly felt James grip his shoulder. Harry shook him off and started walking towards the doors. He noticed Damien eyeing his father awkwardly as he tried to get through the crowd and join him. James shook his head at Damien and told him to go to class and that they would meet at lunch. Damien nodded his head, although he looked disappointed. He smiled at Harry and shouted 'Good Luck' as he hastily joined the third years. Harry rolled his eyes at the message given to him. As if he needed luck for attending...what class did he have? Harry took out the crumpled timetable and saw that he had a double period of History of Magic.

'Brilliant' Harry thought to himself. 'What a way to waste time.' James was walking next to Harry as they exited the Great Hall and made their way to the classroom.

Before Harry went to join the group of Gryffindors and Ravenclaws standing outside the classroom, James pulled Harry aside and gave him his schoolbag.

"What about my wand?" Harry asked.

"You'll get it soon, but for today you don't need it. Your classes today don't require a wand."

Harry opened his mouth to argue but then thought otherwise. As he made to leave James grabbed onto Harry's arm.

"Harry, I don't want you pulling any stunts in class okay. I don't know what you were trying to prove this morning at breakfast but I don't want you disappearing like that again. Do you understand?" James couldn't help the anger that seeped into his voice.

Harry looked at James calmly and answered him in his most relaxed voice.

"Come now Potter, don't hide what you want to truly say. You don't want me disappearing again or you don't want me disappearing with *Damien* again?" Harry smiled as James paled at the mention of his youngest son. Harry continued.

"Don't you see Potter, Damien is your weakness, you can't expect me not to take advantage of that, can you?"

James lost his temper at hearing these words.

"Harry you won't harm Damien! You won't hurt him in any way, understand!"

James was shaking with rage now

"Whether I will or won't harm him Potter is up to me. As demonstrated earlier, I can make you break out in a full panic without touching a

single hair on his head. For now it's enough that you believe that I could hurt him, after that...well, we'll see." Harry sneered at the look of dismay on James' face.

The door to the classroom opened and the students began walking in. Harry stepped away from James and walked away, leaving the distressed man standing alone in the hallway.

xxx

"No Dumbledore, its not going to work! This is just turning into a disaster! He openly threatened me with Damien. He's too dangerous! We should never have brought him here." James was pacing the floor of Dumbledore's office, unable to calm down from his encounter with Harry.

Dumbledore sat quietly, letting James release the anger and frustration out of him. He knew that James had to calm down before he could explain anything to him.

Finally after twenty five minutes of shouting on James' part, the exhausted man collapsed in a chair in front of the Headmaster. Professor Dumbledore looked at James and saw the sadness in his eyes.

"James, I told you before, this is by no means going to be easy. Harry is going to be very difficult, it is only natural for him to resist us and to challenge us. We mustn't give up so easily."

James looked at Dumbledore with tired eyes.

"Dumbledore, I'm not giving up easily, do you realise how difficult this is for me, for Lily and Damien. We want more than anything to have our Harry back but I'm not prepared to hurt any innocent in the process." James watched with a confused expression as Dumbledore rose from his seat and smiled serenely at James.

"Exactly James, exactly. No innocent shall be harmed in any way and not by Harry that's for certain."

At James' baffled expression Dumbledore explained.

“You see, I had Professor Snape gather more information on the Dark Prince and you will be quite surprised at what he has managed to find out. It seems that the Dark Prince isn’t as a ruthless fighter as we all had first imagined. He actually has some rules and one of them is that no innocent shall be harmed at his hands. By innocent, Harry means any child.”

James couldn’t believe what he was hearing. How was that even possible? Surely Voldemort wouldn’t stand for Harry having any sort of morals. What was going on?

“But Dumbledore, what about You-Know-Who, why does he tolerate these *rules* Harry has?”

“Harry is very successful in completing his so called assignments. I would imagine that Voldemort allows Harry to fight in whichever way he pleases, as long as Harry wins. Voldemort treats Harry differently. Severus tells me that Harry does not bow to Voldemort like the rest of the Death Eaters. Harry is treated somewhat like an equal by Voldemort, so naturally he would not interfere with whatever rules Harry lays out for himself.”

Understanding dawned on James and he stood up from his chair as well.

“Madame Pomfrey’s children! That’s why he saved them. He thinks of all children as innocent, so he risked his life to save them.”

James felt as if a huge weight was lifted from his shoulders. Harry wouldn’t hurt anyone that would be anyone under the age of seventeen, so the students at Hogwarts were safe. James let out a huge sigh of relief. Harry was bluffing when he said he could hurt Damien. He was only trying to get James worked up. ‘Well that worked’ James thought to himself.

James felt a new sort of respect for Harry. He had grown up in the clutches of the most evil wizard the world had ever seen, but he still managed to grow up with some morals. However something just didn’t quite add up. Why did Harry have these morals? He was only fifteen months old when he was snatched away from his home and as much as James wanted to pretend that Harry had goodness inside

him, there was no way Harry knew good from evil at that age. Furthermore why did Voldemort stand for it? Surely this could pose problems for Voldemort's future. James looked at the Headmaster again before voicing his concerns.

"Something just doesn't add up Dumbledore, Harry couldn't have grown up with morals, it just isn't fathomable. Why does Harry not want to hurt children? As sad as it sounds, I think You-Know-Who would have made Harry hurt any living thing as soon as Harry could hold a wand. As much as giving Harry his own rights, I still don't think he would have allowed Harry to have any sort of compassion for others. And as far as innocents go, isn't that who Death Eaters usually target? This doesn't make any sense." James finished fretfully.

"I am assuming that Harry doesn't see *us* as innocent. He only thinks about children as innocents but you're right James, it doesn't make any sense that is why Severus has instructions to find out as much as he can, but until then we have the peace of mind that Harry will not hurt any child here at Hogwarts."

James nodded his head absent-mindedly. He personally didn't trust Snape to find out anything more, Snape wouldn't be interested in finding out any information on Harry. James decided that he was going to get to the bottom of this himself. James would find out as much information as possible on his son's past and his upbringing. Why Harry felt he should not harm children? After all aren't defenceless children the Death Eaters favourite targets? If James could prove that Harry had been saving people as the Dark Prince, then it would only help Harry in receiving a full pardon from the Ministry.

James walked towards the door lost in his thoughts when suddenly he realised something.

"Dumbledore, when did you find out about this?" he asked the Headmaster.

"I found out shortly after Harry was captured, why?"

James smiled at the Headmaster. Dumbledore really was a very cunning old man.

“So that’s why you were not worried about Harry coming to Hogwarts, you knew he wouldn’t hurt any student. The sleeping arrangements were devised accordingly as well I presume?”

Dumbledore only smiled and inclined his head slightly.

“James, I take the safety of my students very seriously. I would never expose them to any dangers that were not controllable”

James only smiled and left the office, heading back to collect Harry for his next class. James couldn’t help smiling. Maybe there was hope for Harry after all.

xxx

The rest of the day went by uneventfully. Harry walked into the Great Hall, accompanied by James and sat down at the Gryffindor table for Dinner. Harry had just had his first ever classroom lessons. Back home, he used to get lessons with Bella, Lucius or his father, Lord Voldemort. Harry felt a pang of homesickness. He really wished he could speak to Draco but Potter was not letting Harry out of his sight. All of Harry’s classes today were with either the Ravenclaws or Hufflepuff, so Harry had still not seen Draco. He looked around at the Slytherin table to see if he could spot the blond haired boy, but Draco was nowhere to be found. Harry looked at the food that was in front of him. He was hungry but couldn’t make himself eat on the moment. With a sigh Harry tried to eat the food on his plate.

He spotted Damien entering the hall with the Weasley boys, a bushy, brown haired girl and the girl that Harry had ran into this morning. Now that Harry could see her with the three Weasley boys it was pretty obvious that the girl was their sister. Ron and the brown haired girl, who Harry had guessed was the ‘mudblood Granger’ who Draco had always talked about, had been in all the classes with Harry. Harry had kept to himself in all his classes. It was obvious that most of the staff at Hogwarts didn’t agree with Dumbledore’s decision of bringing Harry to the school. Most of the teachers had ignored Harry and tried not to speak to him. This suited Harry, as he was too lost in his thoughts of how to escape from here, to be paying much attention to lessons any way.

Harry looked away and hoped that Damien and his group of friends wouldn't spot him and sit next to him. He really couldn't deal with them right now. However, Harry's luck was not with him these days, as Damien hurried over to sit next to Harry and had dragged the other five teenagers with him. Harry saw the looks of discomfort on the five teens faces as they sat around down Harry. Harry did his best to ignore them and concentrated on pushing the food around on his plate. Damien however chose to ignore Harry's behaviour and started chatting to him.

"Hey Harry, how were the classes? Probably quite boring, like usual huh?"

Harry hadn't even opened his mouth to respond when Damien pushed on with the introductions of his friends.

"Oh, these are my friends by the way, Ron and Hermione you've met already..." Harry smirked at the uneasy looking Ron, "...this is Fred and his twin George and this is Ginny." Damien finished with a proud look on his young face.

Harry kept quiet as the five teens looked awkwardly at Harry and then at Damien. Harry locked his gaze with Ginny. The red head gave Harry another cold look and then started filling her plate with food. The raven haired turned his attention on Damien.

"When are you going to complete your tour then?" he asked Damien.

"Um, whenever you say."

"Now" Harry said.

"Now? Don't you want to eat dinner first?" Damien asked as he eyed longingly at his plate filled with food.

"No, I'm not hungry. Second thoughts forget it, I'm just going to go to by myself." Harry started to stand up when Damien also jumped to his feet.

"No Harry, I'll go with you."

“Damien, don’t you want to finish your food first?” Ron asked quietly. Harry saw the look of anger cross Ron’s face as he glanced at Harry.

“No thanks Ron, I’m really not all that hungry.”

Damien quickly walked to the door with Harry. Both boys looked over at the staff table before stepping outside. Damien waved his hand at his mum and dad, signalling that he was going outside with Harry. To Harry’s utter surprise James waved back with a smile on his face, gesturing that it was fine to do so. Harry wondered why James didn’t try and stop them. He shrugged it off thinking that it was a good thing since now Harry didn’t have to worry about being quick in his actions. He had plenty of time.

Harry told Damien he wanted to see the outside of Hogwarts first, so Damien led him outside. As soon as Harry stepped outside he spotted the person he wanted to meet, Draco Malfoy was hurrying towards the door with the rest of the Slytherins, they were obviously returning from Herbology since Harry could see most boys and girls smelling their hands with disgusted looks. His best friend was the worst, he had his pale face scrunched up in a look of utter disgust and was complaining the loudest about ‘filthy little creatures’ and ‘why do they need to eat anyways’.

Harry felt excited at finally getting to speak to Draco. He turned to face Damien.

“Wait here kid.” Harry said as he started to walk towards the Slytherins.

“What! Why?” Damien asked looking a little puzzled.

“Just do as you told!” Harry snapped at Damien, who looked taken aback by Harry’s sharp tone.

Harry left an upset looking Damien standing at the steps as he hurried down to meet the Slytherins. Draco was so engrossed in complaining that he didn’t see the raven haired boy come towards him. Harry managed to slip behind Draco as the blonde boy continued to complain.

"I swear this is just a waste of time! Father always says that the subjects taught at Hogwarts are useless! I mean who cares about a few useless plants and what their properties are. When are we ever going to need to know pointless information like that?" Draco was trying to clean his hands vigorously by a 'Scourgfy' spell.

"I don't know about that Malfoy, some plants can be used to save your life." Harry said, causing the Slytherin blonde to whip around and stare at Harry.

Harry smiled at his best friend, thoroughly enjoying the look of shock on his pale face. Draco stood frozen to the spot, he couldn't believe his eyes.

"H-Harry? How did you ...What are you doing here?"

Draco cast a nervous glance around him, as if looking for someone.

"Is Hogwarts under attack?" the blond whispered nervously.

"No you dim-wit! If Hogwarts was under attack do you think I would be standing here talking to you so calmly?" Harry shook his head at Draco. 'Honestly, why was Harry friends with an idiot like him?'

Draco seemed to blush and cried out in defiance.

"Hey! Who are you calling a dim-wit? I only asked since that was the only reason *you* would ever set foot in Hogwarts!"

Harry's expression darkened as he looked over to the main doors of Hogwarts.

"Yeah, that's what I used to think too." Harry said with a mixture of emotions in his voice. Draco could detect some hurt and anger present. Draco quickly commanded the two goons, Crabbe and Goyle to leave, who hastened to obey the blond Slytherin, leaving Harry and Draco alone.

"Harry what happened?" Draco asked, now completely bewildered at Harry's presence at Hogwarts and by his weird response.

Harry brought his piercing gaze over to Draco. He studied his friends face before asking,

“You don’t know what happened?”

“What are you talking about? What happened?” Draco was now getting very confused.

“I was captured by the Order a little over two weeks ago.”

Harry watched as Draco’s grey eyes widened with surprise, he seemed to pale even more than normal.

“W-what?” he spluttered out.

“How can you not know? Your father never mentioned anything?” Harry asked while trying to imagine a reason why Lucius wouldn’t have told Draco.

Draco’s eyes narrowed and he looked a little uncomfortable.

“Um...no...but it’s probably because I wasn’t exactly around. Mum and I went to Spain for the last two weeks. There were...issues that had to be resolved.” Draco finished a little hesitantly.

Harry understood in a heartbeat. Lucius and Narcissa were having problems with their marriage now for over two years. Often Draco would accompany his mum in going to Spain, where Narcissa’s family lived, whenever there was a particularly nasty fight between the Malfoys. Harry realised that Draco must have come to Hogwarts straight from Spain. ‘He probably hasn’t even spoken to Lucius in the last two weeks’ Harry thought to himself.

“I sent you a couple of owls, telling you what was happening, but obviously you were...” Draco trailed off, not knowing how to ask what Harry had been through at the hands of the Order.

Harry smiled again at Draco but didn’t say anything. Harry saw a few figures approach Damien and became aware of his primary reason for wanting to speak to Draco.

“Draco, listen I need you to deliver a message for me. Tell my father that I am safe. Whatever happens, DON'T attempt a rescue mission. That is exactly what Dumbledore wants. Tell him that the only way I can escape is by bringing the wards placed on Hogwarts down, even if it's only for a few minutes, it's all I need to escape from here.”

Draco looked at Harry with a bewildered look.

“Harry, are you nuts? There is no way the wards can be brought down. Hogwarts is one of the most heavily protected places. It will take months to work them out, let alone brought down.”

“Draco it can be done, wards are not always as reliable as everyone thinks, they can be weakened. Hogwarts wards are already being worked on, that was the last project father had started up. Sooner or later Hogwarts wards will be weakened. The wards on the school itself will be impossible to break but the ones placed on Hogwarts grounds can be weakened All I need is a few minutes to slip past the gates, then the Death Eaters can help me get home. If it takes months, so be it, I would rather stay here for a couple of months than risk my father being captured.”

Draco still looked sceptical but told Harry that he would deliver the message nonetheless.

Harry began walking away but Draco stopped him to ask questions about why the Order had not sent him to Azkaban. Harry shrugged Draco away from himself and whispered that he would explain later, when he had more time. Harry quickly made his way back to Damien and his friends.

Damien looked at Harry curiously. Harry had spent a good five minutes talking to Malfoy. Harry and Draco Malfoy knew each other, that much was obvious. But what were they two talking about? Damien had to restrain himself from not walking over to find out. Damien was surprised to find Ron, Hermione and Ginny arrive and stand next to him.

“What are you guys doing here?” Damien asked, surprised that his friends had finished their dinner so quickly.

“We weren’t that hungry.” Ron said looking around for any sign of Harry.

Damien snorted.

“That must be a first for you.” he joked.

Ron’s smile vanished as he saw Harry talking to Draco.

“What the hell is he doing talking to Malfoy?” Ron asked with an angry scowl on his face.

“Don’t know.” Damien replied, looking quite uneasy with the whole situation.

He saw Harry walk away from Draco and make his way over to him. Damien watched as Draco quickly walked towards the side entrance of Hogwarts and ran inside. As Harry came nearer Damien asked him,

“What were you doing talking with Malfoy, you’re not friends with him are you?”

Harry looked pointedly at Damien as he walked closer to the teen.

“What if I am? If you can be friends with the likes of her, then I don’t see why I can’t be friends with Malfoy.” Harry gestured with his head towards Hermione as he talked to Damien.

The four teenagers acted as if they had been burned by Harry’s words. Ron seemed to lose whatever shred of patience he had, as he shouted at Harry.

“What do you mean by that? Hermione’s worth ten times you and Malfoy put together! You’re so bloody ridiculous, you have no right to talk to us like we’re inferior to you!” Ron was red in the face and had instinctively taken a step towards Harry.

Harry looked at Ron and answered,

“But you are inferior, especially to me.”

The four teens were looking at Harry with incredulous looks on their faces. Harry was enjoying it immensely as the two Weasley's turned as red as their hair and were obviously finding it hard to say something. Hermione was staring at Harry, barely controlling her temper. Damien by far looked the worst. He was caught between the crossfire of his brother and his best friends. He looked helplessly at Harry and then Ron to plead them to stop. Ron was about to respond to Harry's words when suddenly Hermione put a hand on his arm, stopping him.

"Ronald, don't. It's not worth it. He's not worth it!" she added while eyeing Harry angrily.

Harry suddenly lost his cool exterior as Hermione's words stung him.

"Not worth it! So now I'm going to have to learn my worth from a dirty little *mudblood* like you!" Harry hissed at her.

The effect was instantaneous. Ron grabbed his wand and pointed it at Harry while the two girls gasped loudly at Harry's words. Damien shouted at Ron,

"RON NO! He doesn't have a wand! Ron don't!..." but Ron was far too angry to hear him as he threw a hex at Harry.

"INCARTO" Ron shouted as a yellow light came flying out of Ron's wand.

Harry moved out of the way so fast that it looked like he had simply disappeared and then apparated in front of Ron. With one hand Harry grabbed Ron's wand hand and with the other Harry threw a mighty punch at Ron's face. Ron howled at the pain of his nose breaking. He struggled to free his wand hand as his other hand was trying to stop the stream of blood pouring out. In one fluid motion Harry snapped Ron's wrist. The loud cracking noise caused Damien, Ginny and Hermione to cry out in horror. Ron let out an anguished cry. Harry grabbed the front of Ron's robes and pulled him so that Ron's bloodied face was only inches away from Harry.

"Don't ever think about attacking me, Weasley! I can snap your neck just as easily." Harry hissed dangerously at him before letting him go.

Chapter Nineteen

The next morning Harry expected a long lecture from James about the incident with Ron. Surprisingly James didn't mention it at all as he led Harry down to the Great Hall for Breakfast.

As Harry entered the hall he spotted Draco sitting at the Slytherin table. He immediately caught Harry's eye and nodded at him signalling that Harry's message had been delivered. Harry gave him a small nod back. As Harry sat at the Gryffindor table he noticed a very red looking Ron sitting with Hermione, Ginny and Damien. They all saw Harry approach and the shade their faces turned was enough to make Harry smile for the rest of day.

Harry sat down as far away as he could from the rest of the Gryffindors. Harry had not even touched the food in front of him when he saw someone sit in front of him. Harry looked up to see Damien, once again, seated in front of him.

"I need to talk to you." Damien said with a serious look on his face.

"When do you ever *not* need to talk to me?" Harry said while helping himself to some pancakes.

"Harry, what happened yesterday...you can't go around treating people like that! You can't call others such *disgusting* names and you sure as hell can't hurt others like you hurt Ron." Damien said the last part as quietly as he could.

Harry just blinked at Damien.

"And you think just because *you're* telling me this I'm going to listen?" Harry gritted his teeth as he leaned closer to Damien.

"Just because you're a spoiled little brat who gets whatever the hell he wants from his no good parents, doesn't mean that you can tell me what I can and cannot do!" Harry hissed at Damien.

Damien looked utterly shocked at Harry's words. He took a deep breath and calmed himself down before speaking to his elder brother.

“Harry, first of all I am not some spoiled kid who gets everything I want, second, if you ever call our parents that again I will show you just how much damage I can do.”

Harry could barely control the laughter that came at these words.

“Do you even think before you speak? You really think you can threaten me? Listen here kid, I’ve hurt more people than you’ve met in your life. I don’t know what you’ve been told about me, but it obviously isn’t the truth since you don’t seem to realise how much pain I can cause. If anything the only emotion you should feel for me is fear.” Harry finished.

“Well, I don’t fear you, not in the slightest. And I know that I should be afraid of you, especially after last night but I’m not. As for what I should feel towards you, Harry whether you like it or not you’re my brother and I can’t hate my own blood. No matter what you say or do.”

With that said Damien got up to face a rather shocked looking Harry.

“By the way, we’ve not mentioned last night’s incident to anyone, and you shouldn’t either.”

Harry was brought out of his shock at this.

“Why?” Harry asked

“Well, it would only cause problems. Not only for you but for Ron as well as he attacked you when you didn’t have a wand to protect yourself.”

Damien made his way back to his friends and left a very confused Harry behind.

xxx

Lord Voldemort stood facing his two most loyal Death Eaters. Lucius had just finished reading the letter his son, Draco, had sent him, delivering Harry’s message. Bella stood next to him, both had their heads bowed and were waiting for their master to give his commands.

Bella was furious. 'What does he think he's doing! Instructing us not to attempt a rescue mission, Ha! Does he really think we are going to leave him at Hogwarts? Especially in the presence of that old, blood traitor, Albus Dumbledore. Just wait for the command Bella, then you can go and bring Harry back, yes, back to Lord Voldemort, where Harry truly belongs!' Bella told herself.

Bella would march into Hogwarts without a second thought if she had a chance to get Harry back. Bella had taken Harry's absence the hardest. She continuously blamed herself for Harry's capture. If only she had gotten to Harry first then all of this would not have happened. Bella came out of her thoughts as Lord Voldemort spoke to Lucius.

"Lucius, how far along is the project with Hogwarts wards?"

Lucius nervously gulped before he answered.

"My Lord, we have been able to identify two thirds of them, but we still have to work out how to weaken them."

Lord Voldemort's red eyes burned in anger for a moment before he asked Lucius again.

"How long Lucius?"

"My Lord, if I have to estimate I would say around two or three months."

Lucius didn't even get a chance to prepare for the cruciatus curse as it hit him straight in the chest. Lucius closed his eyes and clenched his teeth tight to stop the agonising scream from escaping him. After a minute or two the curse was lifted and Lord Voldemort hissed at him again.

"How many Malfoy, two or three months?"

"T-t-three m-months my L-lord." Lucius stammered out trying to catch his breath.

Lord Voldemort seemed to be lost in thought again as he pondered over the information given to him. If he accepted Harry's plan then he

would not even have a chance to get Harry for three months, so much could happen in three months. Voldemort trusted Harry not to give in to Dumbledore but with the Potters being there with Harry as well, Harry could become manipulated into leaving Lord Voldemort. No! This was not an option. Lord Voldemort would not be able to wait three months to see Harry again. Harry had to be brought back, now!

“Lucius, Bella I want you to get the rest ready, we will go to Hogwarts tonight to get Harry. I am not prepared to wait for three months to see my son again. There is too much damage that can be done to him in that space of time.”

Bella inwardly gasped at the mention of damage. Draco had said in the letter that Harry was unhurt, but he also had mentioned that in his own opinion Harry had looked a little ill. Bella knew what Harry was like. She knew that Harry was probably not looking after himself properly. ‘Gees Bella, Harry’s right, you do sound like you’re his mother!’

“My Lord, I agree that the time it will take us to bring down the wards is long, but we can’t go into Hogwarts just now...”

Lucius’ words were cut off by another dose of the cruciatus curse. Once Lord Voldemort lifted the curse he whispered dangerously to him.

“Never tell me what I can or cannot do Lucius, it could prove fatal for you next time.”

“I apologise my Lord, I only meant that Dumbledore will no doubt have strengthened the wards in case we come for Harry. My Lord, the Dark Prince is right. Dumbledore is probably doing this so that he can capture you. He is using Harry as a means to get to you. Harry doesn’t want to be the reason you’re captured, please my Lord, Harry is right. The only way to get Harry back is once the wards have been weakened.”

Lucius hoped he wouldn’t get cruciatused again. His legs were already shaking and he couldn’t breathe properly. Lucius watched as Lord Voldemort seemed to think over Lucius’ words.

“Very well, but I want you, Bella, Avery and other inner circle members to position yourselves in Hogsmeade. I want Hogwarts surveyed at all times. I don’t care how you work it out but I want at least ten Death Eaters disguised in Hogsmeade at all times. If there is an opportunity to get to Harry, I don’t want it missed. Is that understood?”

“Yes My Lord” Lucius replied, relieved at the outcome of this meeting. However his relief was only short lived as Bella erupted.

“My Lord! No! We can’t leave Harry in that awful place. We don’t know what they could be doing to him! They could be hurting him and we can’t go in to help him. We must go in now to rescue Harry! We can take the whole force! They can’t beat all of us. Please My Lord we have to get Harry out!”

Bella only stopped when Lucius had grabbed her from her shoulders and had shook her to regain her sense. She immediately fell to her knees and sobbed out her apologies.

Lord Voldemort however didn’t cast any torture curses on her. Lucius always knew that Bella was Lord Voldemort’s favourite, as he rarely ever punished her. Bella got up to her feet and after being dismissed by her master, she quietly followed Lucius outside where they began to make arrangements for their trip and stay at Hogsmeade.

xxx

Harry had his very first Potions class this morning. As Harry entered the dungeons he saw Lily sitting at her desk with a smile on her lips. Harry felt annoyance grow within him. He hadn’t spoken to Lily since he arrived at Hogwarts. Harry went to the back of the classroom and sat down. He focused his attention on his desk.

As the class filled in Harry noticed Draco sit in the row ahead of Harry’s. To Harry’s surprise the only people who came and sat next to him were Ron, Hermione and Neville. Harry still managed to avoid Neville. Harry wasn’t sure how to even look at Neville without remembering that night he and the Death Eaters had attacked the Longbottoms. Harry gave himself a mental shake. ‘Snap out of it Harry’ he scolded himself. Harry twisted the black and silver coloured

ring on his finger, unconsciously. He was brought out of his thoughts at the sound of Lily's voice.

"Right, Good morning class, I have decided to do a freshen up revision lecture today. I know that a long summer can cause your young minds to forget your potions basics, so I think we should go over what we learned in our O.W.Ls last year before moving on to the N.E.W.T.S level of work."

Lily let her eyes rest on Harry for a moment. He had his head lowered so she couldn't make out his expression. Harry knew that the revision lesson was planned for his sake. He smiled to himself as he thought about the shock she would receive when she learned how advanced Harry was in potions. His father had Harry learn potion brewing when Harry was only nine years old. Harry sat back and watched as the hands flew in the air to answer the easiest of questions.

Harry didn't volunteer any answers and watched in amusement as Hermione's hand never left the air. She answered many questions and did so with complete textbook answers.

'Merlin, at least say the damn thing in your own words' Harry thought to himself as he listened to Hermione drone on about the 'ten different uses of dragon's tongue'

Harry was brought out of his musings by the sound of his name being called. He looked up to find everyone staring at him. Harry looked at Lily who was staring at him, waiting for him to answer the question she had asked. Harry had not been listening hard enough and looked at Lily blankly. He heard sniggering next to him and saw Ron and Hermione trying to stop their giggling. Lily repeated the question.

"Harry, I asked if you knew what the difference between the Hervincore and the Harnicord herbs are and what they are mainly used for?"

Hermione's hand shot in the air again and she looked like she would topple out of her chair if she wasn't given the chance to answer the question.

Harry turned back to Lily and answered.

“Hervincore is used in potions for mind control and can only be used once as they completely dissolve in the potion whereas Harnicord is used in potions to control ones behaviour, such as becoming angry, depressed or even violent. This herb is reusable after the potion is made. The main difference between them is their ability to be reused or not and their main purpose is to control the drinker’s mind and actions. Once the potion is drunk both herbs cause the potion to be undetectable in the drinker’s bloodstream.”

Harry finished and enjoyed the looks of shock on many students’ faces. Hermione sat with her hand still suspended in the air but only because she forgot to bring it down. Ron and Neville were sitting open mouthed and were unable to look away from Harry. Even Draco had a look of surprise. Lily beamed with pride. Even she couldn’t have answered that question so thoroughly.

“Ten points to Gryffindor.” she said in a happy voice.

Harry groaned. If he knew that his answer was going to get house points he would lied, or maybe not have answered at all.

The class continued with more revision and soon everyone was packing to go to their next class. As Draco passed Harry he slipped him a note. Harry placed it in his robes pocket discreetly. Before Harry could leave Lily had him cornered.

“Harry, I was really impressed with your answers in class today, you must have a really deep knowledge of Potions.” Lily was smiling at Harry but the raven haired boy only glared at her coldly.

“Yeah, I’ve been taught by the best.” Harry said coldly, keeping eye contact with Lily.

Lily tried not to let the comment affect her. She took a deep breath as she leaned over and placed a hand on his shoulder.

“Harry, I know things have been really hard lately and you probably hate us for putting you through this but you’ll see that this is all for your own good.” Lily had wanted to say comforting words to her son but the words she had spoken had quite the opposite effect.

Harry pushed her hand away from his shoulder and gave her another hate filled stare before storming out of the class. Lily sighed and tried not to get upset over Harry. It was only to be expected but Harry's resistance to his parents was getting more and more hurtful. Lily pushed these depressing thoughts away from her mind and prepared for the third years coming into her class. She caught sight of Damien as he sat down in the exact seat that his brother had just vacated. Lily smiled and started her lesson.

xxx

Harry had only managed to read Draco's note at lunch time. He carefully removed the note from his pocket and read it quickly under the table. It was only three words.

'Library at eight!'

Harry sighed and looked at his plate. Harry had completely lost his appetite since coming here. He barely ate anything and felt light-headed because of it but no matter how hard he tried he couldn't bring himself to eat anything. He absent-mindedly played with the horcrux around his neck, wishing he was with his father right now. Harry quickly forced a small amount of mashed potato into his mouth and then waited for James to come and get him.

James came fifteen minutes later. As both of them made their way upstairs Harry turned to James.

"I want to go to the Library."

James looked at Harry suspiciously.

"Now, you want to go now?"

"Yes, now." Harry hated it when someone asked a stupid question.

"What for?" James asked eyeing Harry oddly.

"What do you think? You've got me attending N.E.W.T.S level classes, I have to get all the pointless homework done and I need reference books." Harry watched as James observed Harry's face.

“Why don’t you go in the morning, you can’t get anything done tonight.”

“If you’re going to start dictating when I do my homework then you may as well do the homework yourself because I am not...” Harry was cut off by James.

“Okay, okay, Merlin it was only a suggestion. If you want to see the Library now, then that’s fine, but let’s go since it closes at nine.”

With that said, both of them set off towards the Library. James let Harry wander around and get the books he wanted as he stood and chatted with the members of staff in the library at that time.

Harry spotted the blond head amongst the books and quickly headed towards him. Harry stood next to Draco and pretended to look through the books. Draco told him that Lord Voldemort had sent a message. Harry was to remain at Hogwarts and not get involved in any trouble while the wards were in the process of being figured out and brought down. Many Death Eaters were going to stay undercover at Hogsmeade in case there were any circumstances which could lead to Harry’s escape.

According to Draco’s father, Lord Voldemort and Bella had been not willing to wait for the wards to come down as they were becoming increasingly desperate in getting Harry back. Lucius had managed to calm them down and make them both see that Harry was right. There really was no other way. The wards on the school itself were unbreakable and could not be worked out but the wards on the Hogwarts grounds could be broken, meaning that although no Death eater could come into Hogwarts itself, they could come onto the grounds and duel with the Aurors. Harry had to come out from the school and onto the grounds in order to escape.

Harry felt his heart ache at the mention of Bella and his father. Harry told Draco everything in a hushed tone, from how he was captured to the torture Harry was put through by having James as a personal guard.

Draco looked angry on his friend’s behalf and asked him.

“What I don’t understand is why you’re putting up with all of this? Why don’t you give James Potter the beating he deserves? I mean you know you can take him easily.”

Harry smirked and answered him.

“Draco, I thought you were a Slytherin but you’re taking like a foolish Gryffindor.”

“Take that back!” Draco cried out quietly.

Harry only smirked back at him and continued.

“Use your head Malfoy! What would I gain from beating up Potter, I won’t be able to escape! Even if I can beat Potter without my wand how am I going to beat the thirty Aurors stationed outside Hogwarts?”

Draco’s eyebrows shot up.

“Thirty, they have thirty Aurors guarding you?”

“At least thirty if not more, and you’re forgetting Dumbledore. Even if I am the Dark Prince I would never manage to get past all the Aurors and Dumbledore without my wand, but don’t worry I’m not going to sit back and let them walk all over me.”

Draco’s eyes glinted with mischievousness.

“What are you going to do?”

Harry leaned in closer so that only Draco could hear him.

“I’m going to make their lives hell!”

“How?” asked Draco, now with a hungry look in his grey eyes.

“I had decided this when I first came to Hogwarts. All I have to do is play for time. I have to play it safe, make them think I have no choice but to follow their orders. Once they let down their guard I can have my fun. I’m going to rip their lives apart before destroying them. Of course by then father will have the wards worked out and brought down, so I can return back to him.”

Harry's eyes were burning with a fire that Draco had never seen before.

Draco looked at Harry with surprise.

"Do you think you could manage to control that temper of yours, after all you could get caught out if you repeat last night's stunt?"

Harry knew Draco was referring to the incident with Ron. Draco Malfoy had a way of knowing all the happenings at school, even if no one else did. At Harry's questioning look Draco explained.

"Zabini was in the hospital wing when Weasley was brought in. Zabini heard the whole conversation between the three idiots."

Harry smirked and replied.

"He had that coming, all bloody day I was being harassed and I had to vent off some anger, I lost control then but being the Dark Prince has its perks. I can do some damage without paying for the consequences. Dumbledore will be happy just as long as I'm not taking any lives!" Harry smirked at the blond boy's nervous reaction.

"Draco calm down, you know my rules, but Dumbledore doesn't. This is going to be a lot of fun." Harry saw James looking around for him and knew that the conversation had to be over.

"Draco just let father know that I'm fine and ask him to control his temper. This is hard as it is and I could do without the headaches."

Draco looked mortified.

"I'm not telling him to do anything! He'll have my head for telling him what to do!"

Harry laughed at the look of terror on his friend's face and walked back over to James. After checking out a number of random books Harry returned to the common room. Harry avoided everyone and went straight to his room.

Many Gryffindors, mainly girls, had tried to talk to Harry but the raven haired teen had managed to escape and was now lying comfortably in his bed, thinking about the havoc he was going to cause. With these pleasant thoughts Harry drifted off to sleep.

xxx

The next few days passed by rather uneventfully. Harry was surprised to see that Damien had gone back to his annoying self again and had constantly bothered Harry with rubbish about school. Damien's friends had kept their distance though which was immensely satisfying. However the rest of the Gryffindor and the other houses were taking a lot of interest in Harry. It seemed the entire teenage girl population wanted to talk to the messy haired, green eyed, gorgeous and mysterious boy. Harry ignored them as much as was possible. Most girls didn't even speak to him, they just stared at him and giggled behind their hands. 'Stupid Girls' Harry muttered under his breath.

Harry was pulled aside before breakfast by James. Harry watched as James pulled a wand out and handed it over to Harry. The teen took the wand apprehensively but frowned when he touched it. The wand was not his own, that much was obvious, but there was something else not right about the wand. He turned a questioning look at James.

"The wand is to be used for simple spells only, mainly in class. It has been specifically prepared for you. It will allow all the necessary spells to be cast for your classes but you'll not be able to do much else with it."

James watched as Harry's face turned red with anger, his knuckles had turned white as he tightly grasped the wand.

"You've tampered with the wand?" Harry asked through clenched teeth.

"Yes, we have. It the only way we can make sure there is no threat. Until you can prove that we can trust you with your own wand, you'll have to make do with this one." James was praying Harry wouldn't wandlessly blast him through the school.

Harry was very close to doing just that. He was outraged that he had been given a wand that was usually given to kids, so that they can do magic but only very controlled magic. Harry gritted his teeth as he spoke to James once again.

“When I get out of this mess Potter, remind me to give all of you sorry excuse of wizards a horrible death.”

James only smiled back at Harry’s death threat. James got one almost everyday from Harry.

“I sure will.” he said casually, causing Harry to turn even redder, Harry stormed into the hall and sat down noisily at the Gryffindor table.

After breakfast Harry was led to Defence against the Dark Arts class. Now this was a class that Harry was actually looking forward to. He went inside and sat down in one of the middle rows, and waited for the DADA professor to show up. As Severus Snape walked in, robes billowing behind him, Harry felt a small smile creep onto his face. Snape wouldn’t know how to treat Harry. Surely he wouldn’t dare to ignore him like the rest of the staff at Hogwarts, but Snape couldn’t treat Harry like a normal student either. Harry was going to enjoy Snape’s suffering and since Harry was in such a foul mood today he needed something to entertain him.

Snape stood in front of his class and surveyed the students sitting in front of him. His attention was brought to Harry instantly. Snape, who was usually a composed sort of man, felt his heart thump loudly in his chest as panic took hold of him. If being a spy wasn’t hard enough in front of Lord Voldemort, he now had to act like a loyal Death Eater in front of the Dark Lord’s crazy killer son. Snape was glad he had drunk that calming potion before coming to class, it would surely help him deal with Harry.

Snape pointed his wand at the board behind him and instantly there were instructions on wand movement for casting a befuddling jinx. Harry watched in complete shock as Snape started explaining the correct incantation and wand movement to befuddle the mind of an attacker. Harry couldn’t believe it. The sixth year students at Hogwarts were learning a befuddlement jinx at N.E.W.T level! Harry

had that particular jinx learnt at the age of twelve. Harry watched as the majority of the class started practising the jinx. Out of the entire class only two students managed to do the correct wand movement. Harry was disgusted that one of them was Hermione Granger. The other was a blond haired Slytherin, whose name Harry didn't know. Snape seemed to dislike the fact that Hermione could perform the wand movement as well as he told her off for showing off. Harry could barely control the laughter at looking at Hermione and Ron's face. Snape was so far ignoring Harry and Harry decided it was time to have a little fun of his own. After all, any other Professor that Harry annoyed would go straight to Dumbledore and Harry would have to listen to a long, annoying lecture from the Headmaster, but Snape was a different story. Snape would be reporting directly to Harry's father and Harry had always enjoyed annoying his father's Death Eaters. Harry crossed his arms around his chest and leaned back in his chair waiting for the right opportunity to annoy Snape

Snape continued the lecture and started explaining the correct pronunciation of the spell and asked if anyone had any questions at this point. Usually when Snape asked this question he didn't expect any answers. No one had ever dared to question Snape on anything he taught. That was what the Duelling club was for. Professor June was an extremely pleasant Professor who controlled the duelling club for students from third year to seventh year. Whatever the class learned in theory with Snape was usually practised in the club with Professor June. However for the first time in Snape's class a student did ask a question. Snape felt the horrible feeling of panic take him as he saw Harry open his mouth to ask a question.

"I have a question. Why are you teaching a pointless jinx when there are so many other spells that are worth learning?"

The silence that followed Harry's question could have been a first for Hogwarts. The Slytherins and Gryffindors were sitting with their mouths hanging open. Not only did the new kid ask a question, he actually ridiculed Snape's teaching. The Slytherins mouthed to the rest of the Gryffindors 'he's so dead'.

Professor Snape's pale face turned red at Harry's question. His inner battle of controlling his temper was not working. He walked over to

Harry and couldn't help feeling the hate overtake him as he looked at the face which was so similar to James Potter.

"Mr Potter, you are new here so I'm going to give you what I haven't given to any other student here, a second chance. If you have questions regarding the casting of a spell then feel free to ask questions, but if you are going to voice your opinion on my curriculum then I will have to ask you to keep your opinions to yourself."

Snape's face was twisted in a very ugly scowl that would have caused any other student to shrink away in fear. However for Harry, Snape's expression meant nothing. Harry simply smirked back at the Professor and answered in his most polite voice.

"Well I'm sorry for upsetting you Professor but I just thought that rather than waste everyone's time it would be better if you would actually teach *Defence* against the Dark Arts rather than spells that are completely pointless, not to mention hopeless, if ever to be used in combat. I mean after all we are in the middle of war, how is a befuddling jinx going to help against the unforgivables?"

Harry actually heard the sharp intake of breath from the students in the room. Truth was that Harry didn't care if the students of Hogwarts were being taught anything of value, after all it would actually be beneficial to Harry's side, as the new generation of Witches and Wizards would not have enough knowledge on how to fight and protect themselves. Harry was only saying this to get a rise out of Snape, which was immensely entertaining for the raven haired boy.

Harry kept his green eyes locked with Snape's black ones. Snape seemed to be having difficulty speaking. Harry was sure that if Snape didn't release his anger then Snape would actually burst. Harry kept a straight face and looked at him with faked innocence as Snape struggled to respond to Harry. The entire class' focus was now on Snape. What punishment would come Harry's way? To everyone's utter surprise Snape seemed to calm down and smile at Harry. The class decided that Snape smiling was scarier than Snape's angry face.

"Alright Mr Potter, maybe you would like to stay behind today and give me a list of all the spells that would be more worthwhile learning."

“You’re giving me detention?” Harry asked still with a calm voice.

“If that is how you want to take it then yes, I am.”

“No” Harry said firmly.

The students in class actually dropped their wands and were now staring dumbly at Harry’s bravery, or as some others put it, his death wish.

Snape was livid at Harry’s behaviour, he put his hands down onto Harry’s desk and leaned in so that his face was inches away from Harry’s.

“What do you mean by ‘No’ Mr Potter?” Snape hissed at him.

“I mean, no, I’m not going to attend your detention since I haven’t done anything to deserve it. All I have done is voiced my opinion on the spells you are teaching. I have only made a suggestion and you can’t punish me for that.” and then Harry added in a near whisper, so that only Snape could hear him, “and I would like to see you try.”

Snape was rendered speechless. Any other student would have been serving detention for the rest of the year. However, there was nothing Snape could do to Harry, and sadly for Snape, Harry knew that. Harry sat back and observed the Professor’s face. Snape walked away from Harry’s desk and turned to face his class. The students were gaping at the Professor, obviously baffled by his lack of shouting, cursing and in this instance killing the student who dared to insult him.

Snape took out his raging temper on the rest of the class as he shouted at them to start practising the jinx and ended the class with giving them twice as much homework than he had previously intended. Harry left the class feeling much better. He could annoy Snape endlessly and not have to bother with repercussions, of course he could do that to the rest of the staff as well but Harry never really liked Snape. From all his fathers Death Eaters, Harry didn’t trust Severus Snape. Harry’s father always said that Snape was trustworthy and was a valuable spy but Harry had always felt something was wrong with Snape’s loyalty.

Chapter Twenty

The weeks went by and before Harry realised it, he had been at Hogwarts for one month. Harry had kept himself away from most students. He regularly met up with Draco to keep up with the progress of the wards being weakened. Damien had continued to follow Harry around like a faithful puppy. No matter how horrible Harry was to Damien or how much Harry insulted him, Damien just wouldn't leave Harry alone. Damien was rarely seen by his friends any more. Ron, Hermione and Ginny would always try and convince Damien to sit with them at meal times but the teen would always keep Harry company. After ignoring him, and seeing that that was useless, Harry started responding to Damien's conversations by giving one worded answers like, 'yeah, no, whatever' or just a non verbal shrug. For Damien this was more than enough. Harry felt almost sorry for him. He was trying so hard to get Harry to become friendly towards himself.

James and Lily were continuing in their efforts in trying to get Harry to open up. However, unlike Damien's efforts, theirs was in no way successful. They were always brushed away brutally. Harry didn't speak to any member of the staff except for Poppy and Snape. Poppy would check up on Harry every so often to see how he was getting on. First it was for Harry's health but later it became a normal thing for the school nurse to spend a few minutes talking to Harry, just for a friendly chat. As for Snape, Harry's meetings with him were nothing short of torture. Harry would ridicule and belittle anything Snape was teaching. The thing that amazed everyone immensely was the lack of fight Snape would put up. His threats of detention would get laughed at by Harry and there wasn't anything else the DADA teacher could do. If he took away any Gryffindor house points it only seemed to make Harry happier. The most feared professor at Hogwarts was beginning to lose his intimidating persona.

Currently the said Professor was with the Headmaster, complaining about Harry.

"I just can't take it anymore! He actually laughed at me when I was teaching the deflection jinx. He laughed Dumbledore! And I can't do anything to scare him. Do you know at the last Death Eater meeting

the Dark Lord asked how Harry was doing and when I told him about his charming classroom manners, the Dark Lord warned me that if Harry was ever punished by *any* teacher he would have my head! I can't take this stress anymore." Snape collapsed into the chair opposite Dumbledore while the Headmaster quietly observed him.

"Severus, I know it is very frustrating for you but there really is nothing you can do. If you decide to punish him that will cause problems with Voldemort. I think it is wise to keep ignoring Harry like you are currently doing."

Snape looked at Dumbledore with a snarl.

"Well that's obviously not working is it? Very soon no one will be afraid of me anymore." Snape looked quickly at Dumbledore and tried to disguise his statement.

"Well...you know what I mean, I have to have a certain...respect and...and that can only be achieved by...by having students respect me enough not to question me and annoy me with bothersome things."

Dumbledore chuckled softly.

"Severus, I don't think that anyone will ever be able to walk all over you. Why, all the anger you have at Harry is usually directed at the other students, so if possible I think that the students are now more afraid of you than before."

Snape thought about this and realised that that was in fact true. Since Snape couldn't say anything horrible to Harry he had taken to shout, curse and ridicule many younger students, to keep the fear alive in them. Snape seemed to be quite pleased with himself at this.

Snape knew that Harry only tortured him in this way since Harry knew that the fear of Voldemort was holding Snape back from punishing him. All of the other Professors at Hogwarts would only speak to Harry when necessary and Harry would usually ignore them anyway.

Dumbledore spoke again to Snape, bringing him out of the thoughts he was currently lost in.

“Any information about what it is Voldemort has planned in connection with Harry?” he asked wearily.

Snape’s face fell as he shook his head.

“No, I’m afraid not. There definitely is a plan to rescue the Dark Prince but what it is, no one knows yet. I have a feeling that their trust in me is faltering, since I have been kept out of the loop of many things.”

Dumbledore sighed sadly.

“It may be that Severus they have become suspicious of your loyalties. I would tread the ground very carefully my boy, I do not wish to lose you.”

Snape only smiled back weakly. If his cover was truly blown there would be no ground to walk on as he would probably be buried six foot under it. Snape stood up and took his leave, he had a lecture to plan and Harry to deal with in two hours time.

xxx

Ron and Hermione sat in the common room trying to get through their transfiguration homework.

“Why would I ever want to turn a perfectly good goblet into a big ugly rat?” Ron asked as he struggled to explain the exact wand movements needed in this spell.

Hermione sighed as she tried to look up the five different reference books and tried to remember everything she had learned in class the day Professor McGonagall had gone over this spell. Hermione had to admit, this was a very difficult spell to cast.

She looked up as Damien walked into the common room. They had half an hour before dinner and Damien would probably sit with Harry as he had sat with them for Lunch, so Ron and Hermione beckoned him over immediately and decided to spend a few minutes with their friend.

“Hey, Damy mate, what you been doing?” Ron asked as he tossed his half written essay away.

“Just finished Divination, man that was a drag. How can anyone make any sense of what goes on in that class?” Damien replied while he collapsed into the chair nearest the fireplace.

Hermione and Ron sniggered at the teen’s words. Divination was a real bore and both Ron and Hermione were grateful they had finished with it.

“Anyways, what are you two up to?” Damien asked as he observed the many books scattered around the rug on which Hermione was sitting.

“Trying in vain to do this stupid transfiguration essay!” Ron answered jabbing the half written parchment with his quill.

“Which one is it?” Damien asked, genuinely interested.

“No offence mate, but I don’t think you would know the answer to it.” Ron said while Hermione glared at him.

“Ron, if Damien wants to know then you should tell him. It’s only very rare that Damien shows any interest in studies.”

Damien made a face at Hermione but didn’t say anything.

Ron sighed and read out the essay title. Damien’s face broke into a huge smile and he started laughing softly to himself.

“What? Why are you laughing? What is so funny about this essay?” Ron asked as Hermione stared at the giggling boy before her.

“Nothing, There’s nothing funny about it, I was just laughing at what you guys were going to say when I told you that I can help you with this essay.”

Damien smirked at the looks of incredulity on both his friends faces. Hermione seemed to recover first.

“Damien, this is N.E.W.T.S level transfiguration. How would you be able to help?” she asked softly as not to show disrespect to the teenager. He was only trying to help.

“I didn’t say that I personally knew the answer Mione, I said that I would be able to help you get the answer and complete the essay.” Damien replied.

“Well, how are you going to do that?” Ron asked eager to get rid of this homework piece.

“I know someone who completed that essay two nights ago.”

“Who?” Hermione and Ron asked at the same time.

Damien smiled and replied.

“Harry”

The colour drained from Ron and Hermione’s face and they both glared at Damien.

“Are you crazy? You want us to ask Harry to help us? No thanks, I think I would rather get a ‘Troll’ for this essay than ask him for anything!” Ron said heatedly.

“Ron, when did I say you have to ask Harry to help you, Listen I was with Harry when he completed the essay. I know where he put it. I can just go and get it for you. I’m sure Harry won’t mind.” Damien said.

“No! We don’t want you to do that! what do you think he will do to us when he realises that we copied his essay, I don’t know about you but I like having my wrists joined to my arms.” Ron said, now a little red in the face.

Damien tried not to laugh at Ron’s comment and continued to convince Ron with a straight face.

“Ron, honestly he won’t say anything, and if you’re scared, you should just ask him first.”

“Who’s to say that his essay is right anyway, I mean no offence but if Hermione can’t get the answer I don’t see how anyone else can.” Ron continued not noticing the red blush that had crept onto Hermione’s face.

“Come off it Ron, you know just as well as everyone how good Harry is at his studies. Any homework he’s handed in has always got him an Outstanding.”

How do you know that?” Hermione asked a little suspiciously. She and Ron knew that Harry was getting an Outstanding in every class but how did Damien know. Surely Harry didn’t tell him.

“Dad told me.” Damien answered.

“All the Professors report back to dad about how Harry’s doing. Mum said she was surprised that Harry even did the homework since he never seems to pay attention in class and doesn’t show any interest in anything at all. Dad said that he thinks Harry only does the homework to prove a point, to show that Hogwarts standards are not high enough and that Harry’s education standard was a lot better.” Damien finished a little awkwardly. They all knew who Harry’s previous teachers were and it unnerved the three teens.

“Damien, thanks for the suggestion but I think Ronald and I are just going to work this one out ourselves.” Hermione said a little quietly.

Damien just shrugged and got up out of the chair to get ready for dinner.

“Suit yourself.” he muttered before going to the boys’ dormitory.

Ron and Hermione spent another ten minutes futilely trying to complete their essay. When Damien came downstairs the two sixth years joined him to go down to dinner. No one mentioned the essay again.

Upon entering the Great Hall, Damien spotted Harry right away. He turned to his friends.

“Alright, see you guys in a bit, unless...you guys want to come and join me?” Damien asked hopeful that maybe today his friends would come with him.

Before Ron or Hermione could answer Damien continued.

“Before you guys say no again, just hear me out okay. What happened was wrong but it’s been like a month and I think we all should work past it. I mean, how long are you guys going to hold a grudge?”

“Damien! He broke Ron’s wrist!” Hermione whispered quietly to Damien, so that the passing students wouldn’t overhear her.

“I know but...come on Ron, you know that you shouldn’t have attacked him. He didn’t have anything to protect himself with. What he did was in self defence.” Damien tried to plead with the red haired boy.

Ron looked at Damien and opened his mouth to respond, to tell him that Ron only did what he did since Harry had called Hermione that disgusting name. But the look of desperation on Damien’s face made Ron change his mind. How bad could it be? If Harry and Ron sat at the same table and didn’t speak to one another, what possible damage could happen?

“Alright Damy, but me and Hermione aren’t going to talk to him, okay?”

“Okay!” replied an excited Damien.

He practically raced over to where Harry was sitting. Ron and Hermione followed quietly, all the while, Hermione shooting glares at Ron.

Harry looked up to see Damien running towards him. ‘How that kid doesn’t get tired is beyond me’ thought Harry.

“Hey Harry, how are you?” Damien asked as he sat down.

Harry replied in his usual way, by shrugging his shoulders.

“Cool, listen Ron and Hermione are going to sit with us, okay, but please, please don’t say or do anything to fight with them. Please, I’m begging you okay, just be as civil as you can towards them.”

Harry opened his mouth to argue but before he could he saw the two Gryffindors approach the table and after glancing at Harry, they sat down next to Damien. Harry ignored them and continued eating. After an uncomfortable minute or two Damien, Ron and Hermione started eating and talking. Harry kept quiet and just ignored them, he usually did that to Damien anyway. After the desserts were just about finished, Ginny approached them. She looked really irritated by the fact that her brother and friends were sitting with Harry. She shot Harry a furious glance before turning to speak to Hermione.

“Are you still up to meeting with me at the Library?”

Hermione looked really uncomfortable as she replied.

“I’m really sorry Ginny, but I really have to finish that Transfiguration essay and I’ve got Ancient Runes homework to do as well, I promise I’ll join you later on in the week, okay?”

Ginny looked upset but she quickly forced a smile on her face.

“That’s okay Hermione, I understand. I’ll catch you guys later.”

With that said the red headed girl left the Great Hall to make her way up to the Library.

Hermione looked at Ron and bit her lip.

“I feel awful, I said I’d help her until she found him and now I’m just giving up on her.”

Ron put a comforting arm around her.

“Mione, don’t worry about it. Ginny has to admit that she’s never going to find him, I mean she didn’t even see his face! How in Merlin’s name does she expect to recognise him?”

Harry was trying not to pay attention to the three annoying teens sitting in front of him but the mention of Ginny looking for someone, whose face she hadn't seen brought his attention over to them. Harry had wondered if Ginny had ever bothered to find out who had saved her. Harry had just figured that Ginny would have thought about it for a few days and then she would have forgotten about him. It was now nearly five months since that incident had happened. Surely Ginny wouldn't still be thinking about him, no, it wasn't possible.

'Ginny's probably was talking about someone else.' Harry thought to himself.

Even if she was talking about him, what difference did it make? Harry was not going to tell her or anyone about that incident. It would only fill Dumbledore and the Potters head with foolish ideas about Harry turning to the Light.

Harry returned to finishing his meal and thought about going up to his dorm. He was really tired today.

"Ron, you want to go back to completing the essay?" Hermione asked as she started to get up from the table.

Ron nodded at her with a miserable look on his face.

"I suppose." he sighed.

Damien cried out at once.

"Ron, you said you would come with me to the Duelling club today. It's the first day and I've been waiting ages to go to it!"

Ron looked at Hermione with a pleading look. Hermione was glaring at him and shaking her head.

"Ron, you know that we have to get that essay done, Professor McGonagall will lose her head with you if you fail to hand in homework again!"

“Mione, I promised Damy last year that when he gets into Third year and is allowed to join the club that I would go with him. I can’t break my promise now can I?”

Hermione just huffed at him and after complaining that she would not let him copy her essay, she stalked out of the hall.

Ron and Damien looked at each other for a minute before grinning like idiots.

“Oh man. I can’t wait! I’m going to actually duel with someone, this is so cool.” Damien was practically jumping up and down on the spot.

“Calm down, now I’ll explain the rules as we make our way there.”

Harry had also got up and was planning to go to his dorm but the mention of the Duelling club had once again forced his attention to the two Gryffindors. Harry didn’t know that there was a duelling club in Hogwarts, Draco had never mentioned it.

Damien turned to pick up his bag and suddenly realised that Harry was there as well. ‘Damn, nearly forget about him’ Damien thought, flushing a little with shame.

“Hey Harry, do you want to come as well?” Damien asked before Ron could say anything.

Harry looked at Damien trying to determine if he was serious or not. Before he could respond Ron had jumped in.

“You...you want him to come with us?” he asked eying the younger boy as if he were mad.

“Yeah, why not?” Damien replied, looking a little confused at Ron.

“Because... well, you know...he’s...he’s, he doesn’t need to learn how to duel and he’ll probably...you know... he’ll...”

“That I’ll probably kick everyone’s arse without even trying, right?” Harry finished for him.

Ron looked indignantly at him and replied in a somewhat controlled voice.

“Well that’s not how I would word it but, yeah.”

Harry smirked at him before turning to Damien.

“Do you really want me to come?” Harry asked unsure if Damien had actually wanted to invited him or if he had only asked out of courtesy. Harry knew that he would probably go to the club regardless of Damien, but for a reason unknown to himself Harry wanted to know if Damien really wanted to invite him or not.

“Of course I do, it’ll be cool to see you duel.”

Harry didn’t really know how to respond to that so he settled for shrugging at him and he picked up his bag.

Damien’s face broke into a huge grin as he waved at his parents at the staff table, signalling that he and Harry were going. After getting a wave back from Lily, the three boys set out towards the club.

Harry stepped into the huge hall and thought to himself that the hall wasn’t as big as Harry’s personal training grounds but it would do. There was a platform in the middle of the hall and placed at the front of the platform was four cups. They looked like trophy cups, all four were silver and had strange markings on them. As Harry walked over to examine them he saw that the markings were none other than the markings of the four houses of Hogwarts. Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff and Slytherin.

Harry looked at the cups and wondered what they were used for. He looked around himself as he examined the hall. The hall was bustling with students. Most of them were from the sixth and seventh years. Damien hurried over to Harry, excitement etched on his young face.

“Well, Harry what do you think? Pretty cool eh. I can’t wait for it all to begin!”

Harry turned to his brother and saw how he was reacting to the possibility of having a friendly duel. Harry couldn’t remember ever

getting this excited over anything. Harry thought about how different their lives were. He gave himself a mental shake and tried to push these upsetting thoughts aside.

Harry saw a blond headed boy walk in, accompanied by his usual goons, Crabbe and Goyle. Harry smiled to himself. 'This is going to be fun'.

Harry made his way over to the three Slytherins. Draco did a perfect double take as he saw Harry approaching.

"Harry! How did you...what are you doing here?" he asked.

Harry rolled his eyes.

"Draco, we've been through this already, I told you that staring in the mirror all the time would damage what little brain you have."

Draco shot him a venomous glare as he responded.

"Easy your sarcastic-ness, I meant what are you doing at the duelling club? I didn't think Potter would allow you to come."

Now it was Harry who shot Draco a venomous glare.

"Potter doesn't control me Draco, I thought I made that clear. I do what I want to do."

Draco smirked at Harry and was about to ask another question when the doors to the hall opened and Professor June walked in.

Professor June was a middle aged witch with short purple hair and amazing sapphires blue eyes. She had a round pleasant looking face and walked with a grace that Harry had never seen before.

Professor June stood in front of the students and smiled warmly at everyone.

"Good Evening, everyone!"

"Good Evening!" the students replied back.

“I am Professor June, for those of you that are joining the Duelling club for the first time, welcome, for those of you that are joining us again, welcome back. Let me go over the rules of the Dulling club before we begin.”

She surveyed the eager looking students and continued.

“There will be only one-to-one duels. Everyone who wishes to take part in a duel should put their name and what year they are in the appropriate cup. The house cups will choose the student and their duelling partner. If you wish to duel someone within your own house then you have to get my permission. I will not tolerate any foolish behaviour, and I will ban any student from the club if they try any curses that are not approved by Hogwarts.”

At this point she looked directly at Harry. The raven haired teen only smirked back at her. Even if Harry wanted to he wouldn't be able to cast any dark curses, since his wand was not capable of handling such spells. He looked at Damien who was not paying any attention to the Professor. He was too busy exchanging glares with a skinny third year Slytherin. Harry smiled at the thought of Damien duelling. 'He probably doesn't even know how to block anything yet.' Harry thought to himself. He was looking forward to watching the students of Hogwarts attempt to duel one another. Even if it was only a friendly duel. 'By the looks of their education level I'm won't be surprised if they can only do simple disarming spells.' Harry thought to himself again.

Harry was right, the majority of the duels consisted of the students shouting, 'EXPELLARAMUS' at one another and only being able to deflect the spells. Only a handful of sixth and seventh year students managed to block the oncoming curses and even then the spells managed to go right through the shields after a couple of seconds.

Harry was delighted. Even the seventh year students who would be graduating soon had not managed to learn how to duel properly. They had no chance at standing up to his father. Most of them would be easily convinced to join the Dark Lord's side.

Harry put his name into the Gryffindor cup and stood next to Draco as he put his name into the Slytherin cup. Both boys stood back waiting for the cups to display the names of the next two duelling partners.

"I can't wait to see the poor idiot who gets paired up to duel with you." Draco said with a smirk.

"I know, I haven't kicked ass for nearly six weeks. I am going to enjoy this immensely." Harry said while flexing his fingers.

Draco only grinned back, eager to see Harry in combat, he had only seen Harry train once or twice, but to see the Dark Prince duelling was something extremely rare.

The Gryffindor and Slytherin cups turned red and green, respectively to the individual house colours, and two names shot up into the air.

Draco nearly choked when he saw '**Draco Malfoy**' next to '**Harry Potter**'.

He looked at the raven haired boy standing next to him. Harry had a strange look on his face.

"Strange, I only wrote *Harry* on the paper." he said as he turned to face the extremely pale Slytherin.

The hall was clapping politely for the two sixth years. Draco looked around nervously. What was he to do now? He couldn't back out of the duel now, since once the cup spat out your name you had to duel. He couldn't win in a duel with Harry, it wasn't possible and if he lost he would lose face in front of the Slytherins. He looked at Harry who gave Draco a cruel smile before he walked up to the platform. Draco followed quickly and tried to work out what he was going to do. Before the boys got onto the platform Draco whispered to Harry quickly.

"Remember Harry, I'm your friend, your only friend. Okay, remember that."

Harry only smirked back and answered him in a whisper.

“Not right now you not. You’re my duelling partner.”

With that the two boys climbed onto the platform. Damien and Ron were watching the entire scene, not daring to take their eyes away from the two boys on the platform. Damien whispered to Ron.

“This is going to be interesting!”

“I’ll say.” Ron was torn between who he wanted to get a good thrashing. He hated Draco Malfoy with every fibre of his being but he also wanted to see Harry taken down a peg or two. They watched along with the other students as Harry and Draco bowed to each other.

Harry allowed Draco to take the first shot. Draco concentrated on what Harry had said, before firing a ‘Stupefy’ hex at him. ‘He’s just a duelling partner, not a friend or even the Dark Prince, just a duelling partner’.

Harry easily deflected the hex and sent the ‘expelleramus’ spell at Draco. Draco seemed to relax slightly as he blocked the simple disarming spell. That was precisely what Harry wanted. As soon as he saw the visible relaxation in Draco, Harry sent a ‘jelly legs’ jinx at Draco. Draco only barely managed to block the jinx and his grey eyes narrowed in Harry’s direction. Harry sent Draco a vicious sneer to match the blonds’ own. Draco decided it was time to play like a true Slytherin.

“RICTUSEMPRA” He bellowed and watched as the jet of light went speeding in Harry’s direction.

Harry waited until the light was only seconds away from making impact and then almost lazily deflected the spell so that it went zooming back to Draco and hit the blond straight in the chest, causing him to be lifted in the air and thrown back. Draco landed on his back and groaned. Harry heard the cheers of the many Gryffindor students watching the duel.

Draco was on his feet in no time. He aimed another jinx at Harry.

“JABASCO” He sent a jinx that would make Harry cough up baby flobberworms. Harry again waited for the spell to come near him and he simply moved out of the way at the last possible moment. This earned Harry another round of deafening cheers and applause. The students of Hogwarts had never seen anyone with such good reflexes.

Draco was beginning to lose his temper. He couldn't bear the thought of losing. He was a Slytherin, he didn't lose at anything. He decided to play rough.

“SORUPTO” He hissed and sent a stinging hex at Harry.

However Harry brought up his shield just as the spell reached him and the spell died as soon as it hit the blue shield. The students gasped as they saw how strong Harry's shield was. The shields that most students were able to bring up were nothing more than a faint white mist that would protect against very simple and weak spells but would crumble if anything stronger than an 'expellamus' was cast.

Professor June was staring at the shield as well. Of course she knew all about Harry and had expected him to show duelling skills such as these but the sight of such a brilliantly conjured shield still took her breath away.

Harry brought down his shield and grinned maliciously at Draco.

“My turn.” Harry hissed at him.

“CARNESTO” Harry yelled and the white light hit Draco in the chest. Draco was lifted into the air and slammed against the wall. He crumbled to the ground. A very worried Professor June rushed towards him. Draco was helped up and immediately Draco's pale face had turned red. Damien and Ron were clapping along with the rest of the students, except for the Slytherin's who were shooting Harry very dirty looks. Slowly Draco neared Harry again and raised his wand.

“RAGNAS...IMPENDO” Draco shot out two curses, one after another and watched as the two yellow and blue jets of light sped towards Harry. One of the spells was aimed at Harry's head while the other was aimed at Harry's stomach. Harry knew that his shield wouldn't be

able to block two places at once so he let his instinct take over. Harry brought up his full body block shield and the two spells hit off the shield and died. The students in the hall gasped as did Draco. He didn't know Harry could do that. Professor June watched with an open mouth as she took in the sight before her. Harry was standing inside a shimmering blue bubble. Harry brought down his shield and smirked at the look of shock on everyone's faces. He then faced a terrified looking Draco. He raised his wand and shouted out the next curse.

“IMPEDIMENTA”

At once Draco was blasted off the platform and the Slytherin landed quite painfully on his back. The students had never seen anyone so violently being thrown off the platform. The students started cheering as Professor June stepped up and declared Harry the winner of the duel.

The entire hall was screaming words of praise to Harry and applauding him. Harry looked at the sea of students before him and didn't know how to react. He hastily got down from the platform and tried to make his way out but Professor June stopped him.

“Harry Potter! Please come to the front of the hall.”

Harry obeyed and wondered if he was going to be banned from the club because of Draco. He didn't use any dark curses and what happened at the end was just for a laugh. Harry decided he didn't really care if he was banned, it wasn't much fun if you couldn't use any *real* curses anyway.

Harry stood in front of the purple haired Professor as she looked at him intently.

“Mr Potter, I would like to see you perform the blocking spell for me once again.”

Harry was taken aback. He wasn't expecting that from the duelling teacher. He stood a few steps away from the Professor and held his wand out in front of himself, ready for the attack.

“STUPEFY”

Harry once again brought up a perfect blocking shield and killed the stupefy hex instantly.

Professor June's face beamed with joy. She addressed the students standing and watching them.

“This is a perfect example of how I wish for all of you to conjure a blocking shield. You can see that Mr Potter here can bring the shield up very quickly and with much ease. After a few training sessions I would expect all of you to be able to match Mr Potter's skill.”

Harry snorted at this but kept quiet. ‘The idiots at this school have no chance in hell in matching my skills!’ he thought to himself as he watched Professor June continue her speech.

“Mr Potter, I hope you continue in coming to the club every fortnight, as your duelling skills are very advanced and the class could learn something from you.”

Harry stared at the Professor. He didn't want to help train these students, after all it was best if they were as weak as possible. It would only make Harry's life easier once he took over from his father. Harry cleared his throat and addressed the duelling teacher.

“No offence Professor but I would rather not waste my time. There isn't much hope for the students here to learn anything and I don't see what possible benefit I would get in teaching them. After all that is *your* job isn't it?”

Professor June's face turned red as she fought to keep her temper under control. Harry smirked at her. He loved pissing off Hogwarts teachers.

“Mr Potter, I did not intend for you to be teaching anything. I was only implying that you could show your spell casting abilities. As these are your fellow students, I was only hoping you would help them.”

Harry came closer to the Professor so that only she could hear him.

"I'm sure you realise that helping people isn't what I do best."

Harry gave the Professor another smirk before walking away from her and out of the hall, leaving a stunned Professor and many confused students behind him.

As Harry came out of the hall he came face to face with a livid looking James Potter.

[illegible]

Chapter Twenty One

“What in the name of heaven, did you think you were doing?” screamed James.

“I don’t see what all the fuss is about, it was only a duel!”

Harry was looking quite bored as he watched Damien and James shout at each other.

“Only a duel! Only a duel! Merlin Damien, don’t you realise how much of a risk you took? I can’t believe you would do something so stupid!”

James was red in the face from screaming and momentarily forgot that Harry was in the same room. All three Potters were in James’ living quarters at the moment. Damien was equally angry. He had been dragged from the hall by his dad and was now being shouted at just because Malfoy had gotten a beating. He didn’t understand how that was a bad thing.

“Dad, please stop with all the risk talk, nothing bad happened. Malfoy only got was coming to him. And anyway, Malfoy’s the one who threw two curses at Harry. If Harry hadn’t brought up that awesome full body shield, he would have gotten really hurt.”

James stopped talking and looked over at Harry, having only realised that his eldest son was still in the room.

“You conjured the full body block again?” he asked Harry quietly.

Harry only responded by meeting James’ gaze for a minute and then looked away again.

“What happened? Did anyone say anything to you about it?” James asked thinking how he was going to explain to inquisitive students why a sixteen year old can perform magic that usually can’t be performed by most fully grown adults.

“Professor June was ecstatic, I don’t think I’ve ever seen her that happy. She asked Harry to come to the club ever fortnight so that he

can teach us.” Damien quickly told James before Harry could respond. Harry growled at Damien.

James was shocked. Professor June knew the truth about Harry, and even so, she requested him to come to the club every fortnight. Was she mad?

James looked at Damien again and then turned to Harry.

“What did you say?”

“He said that...”

“Damien! I’m not asking you. Harry can talk for himself.” Damien was cut off by James

Damien made a face but didn’t interrupt again. James turned back to Harry.

“Well?” he asked.

Harry leaned back against the wall and folded his arms across his chest.

“Maybe” he replied, enjoying the colour drain out of James’ face.

“What do you mean by ‘maybe’ you can’t possibly go and teach the rest of the students? How are you going to explain all the advanced dark magic you can do?” James asked.

“I’ll tell them the truth that Lord Voldemort taught me, it’s not like they’ll believe me anyway.” Both James and Damien took in a sharp breath at the mention of the Dark Lord’s name.

Harry was enjoying this immensely. He had no intentions of teaching anyone his skills, but watching James freak out at the mere thought of Hogwarts students learning Dark Arts was too good an opportunity to miss. Damien had caught on as well and had decided to get his dad back for embarrassing him, by dragging him from the Duelling club.

“Yeah, Harry is an instant hit anyway. Everyone is talking about his cool duelling and now everyone is going to want to be taught by him. Professor June said that she would let him do private one-to-one duelling with certain students as well.”

Harry and Damien only just stopped themselves laughing out loud as they saw James react to Damien’s words. He was standing with his hazel eyes opened wide in shock and had his mouth hanging open.

“She...she said what!”

Damien winkled at Harry and continued.

“Yeah and when Harry said that he would think about it Professor June said that she wouldn’t take no for an answer and that she would make sure that Harry attended all the duelling classes.”

Harry was watching Damien with new found respect. ‘The kid really is going all out with this’ he thought to himself.

James didn’t say another word and rushed out of the door, stumbling over his own feet as he headed out of the room. He was going to see Professor June. As soon as he left Harry and Damien burst out laughing. It was the first time that Harry had laughed properly, since getting captured by the Order. Damien laughed along with Harry and only realised afterwards that this was the first time he had heard Harry laugh. Both boys calmed down and just looked at each other, not quite sure of what to say to one another.

“That was some white lies you told there.” Harry said at last.

“Yeah, well he deserved that, can you imagine what he’ll say to Professor June? Then when he finds out that we were having him on, he’ll be so embarrassed.” Damien chuckled again.

Harry observed the young boy for a moment before speaking to him.

“You’re not afraid of him?” he asked all the while studying at the boy’s face for tell tale signs of lies.

“Afraid? Of dad? Why would I be afraid of him? Dad is probably the most laid back father I’ve ever seen. I know the last couple of months have been rough, but he usually doesn’t even tell me off. He really is a cool dad.” Damien replied while looking confusedly at Harry. Damien wondered what made Harry think James was a scary father.

Harry seemed to be lost in thought, he looked at Damien once again and Damien felt a chill run through him. It was the first time he saw Harry look at him like that. There was an emotion in Harry’s eyes that Damien had never seen before. It almost looked like, envy? ‘No that can’t be right’ thought Damien. Why would Harry look at Damien like that? Damien was beginning to feel nervous as Harry seemed to be lost in thought again.

“Um, Harry? You alright?” he asked.

Harry snapped out of his thoughts and gave Damien a small smile.

“Yeah, just thinking about something.” he replied.

Damien was about to say ‘well duh’ but thought better of it. He asked Harry if he wanted to play exploding snap but Harry told him that he was tired and decided to go to his room. Harry and Damien made their way up to the common room so that they could go to their respective dorms. All the while, Damien wondered about the strange look Harry had given him.

They bumped into James as they were entering the common room. James just looked at Damien and the two boys laughed at how red James was.

“That was so not funny, Damien Jack Potter!” James yelled, but his face was more relaxed, obviously relieved that Harry was not going to be teaching the students the Dark Arts.

“I would have to respectfully disagree dad. That was bloody hilarious.”

Both boys chuckled at the bemused looking James, before entering the Gryffindor common room.

As Damien got ready for bed he realised that after being with Harry for nearly one month, Damien still had no idea what kind of life Harry had lived. What his childhood must have been like? All the things that Damien took for granted must have been very different for Harry. As Damien fell asleep he promised to himself that he was going to help Harry enjoy the things that he must have surely missed out on, while growing up. What those things were Damien never got a chance to think about as his mind drifted off into a deep, peaceful sleep.

xxx

The weekend came and with it came the first Quidditch practise. Damien and Ron hurried down to breakfast and were busy talking over the new strategies that they were going to put in place. Ron was the Keeper for Gryffindor and Damien had been made a Chaser last year. Their team captain was a sixth year girl, Angelina Johnson, and their team beaters were none other than Ron's brothers, Fred and George. To keep the Gryffindor Quidditch team an entirely Weasley team, Ginny was the Seeker. The four Weasleys worked well together and had helped win many games. However the Quidditch cup had been won by the Slytherin team for many years now and every year the Gryffindor team worked harder than the rest to win the cup. This year was no exception.

Ron sat down with Damien and helped himself to some cereal while Damien grabbed a slice of toast and started spreading jam on it. Just then they saw a very harassed looking Angelina rushing towards them.

"Hey Angie, what up?" asked Damien as he took in her distraught look.

"You guys are never going to believe what's happened! We've lost Kelly Adamson."

"What!" Ron and Damien exclaimed at the same time.

"I know, it's terrible. Her mum and dad have just split up and she's going to be taken away from Hogwarts at the end of next week. Apparently they're going to be moving abroad and she'll be going to another Wizarding school. It's just horrible!"

Damien and Ron didn't know what was horrible, Kelly's parents splitting up, Kelly having to move to another school or the fact that they were losing one of their Chasers. Knowing Angelina, it was probably the losing a Chaser thing more than anything else.

"We're going to have to cancel the practise and instead at 5pm I'm having tryouts for a new Chaser. I want all of you there it's vital we choose someone the entire team is happy with." Angelina finished looking sadly at her two team mates.

"Err, Angie, don't you think you've not given much of a notice period for tryouts, I mean you've not even given one day. How many people do you expect will turn up at one mornings notice?" Ron said a little hesitantly as Angelina's temper was something he didn't want to risk.

"Ron! We don't have time. Kelly only got the owl yesterday and so I didn't have time to announce this earlier. We only have three weeks before the first game! This calls for desperate measures."

Angelina was a little red in the face as she finished shouting at Ron who only looked back at her with a terrified look on his face. Damien held in his laugh as Angelina stood up and rushed off to find more team mates to deliver the terrible news.

Damien and Ron looked at each other and sighed silently. They knew Angelina was going to get a lot worse before she got better.

After breakfast Damien decided to spend some time with Harry as Ron was dragged up by Hermione to finish some homework that Ron had promised to complete yesterday. Damien saw Harry standing talking to Professor Snape in the corridor. Damien could see Professor Snape looking absolutely livid with Harry. Harry was standing quite relaxed and answering Professor Snape with much ease. 'God I need to learn how to do that' thought Damien as he watched Harry smirk and ridicule Snape. Damien stepped as close as he would dare and caught some of the conversation.

"...I will not tolerate this type of behaviour Mr Potter, you should know by now that I am not someone you can scare." Snape was saying with anger and frustration in his voice.

"Of course not, why would I want to scare the Defence Professor. I mean if I step out of line you might *befuddle* my mind in actually paying attention to your pointless lectures. Now that is true punishment." Harry replied in his fake innocent voice. Damien stifled a snigger.

"Mr Potter, I am warning you to hold your tongue!" Snape was actually shaking with rage now as pointed a pale white finger at Harry.

"Warning me? What are you going to do *Severus*? Put me in detention, take away house points. I think we've already established what effect that has on me, and now, if you wish to keep that finger of yours I suggest you put it away." Harry had said the last part with such sweet venom that it brought a shudder to Damien.

Snape looked at Harry dangerously and then without another word, turned and swept down the stairs and was gone. Harry turned around and saw Damien standing a short distance away.

"Merlin Harry, how do you not get scared when he stares at you like that."

Damien hated to admit it but Snape scared him a bit. Even though his dad always told him what a 'greasy git' Snape was, Damien still tried to stay out of the Snape's way.

"That's all he's good for, making strange faces at everyone. He doesn't have the guts to do anything else, so why fear him?" Harry shrugged and walked with Damien.

"Anyway, where were you going?" Harry asked.

"To look for you." Damien answered.

Harry groaned.

"Why? What do you want now?"

"Nothing, actually I was wondering if you wanted to hang out, maybe play something, anything you want really." Damien was hoping that Harry was in a good mood and would give in to Damien.

“Damien, I’m sixteen, I don’t want to **play** anything and especially with you, so bugger off.”

Damien smiled as he thought about what Harry said.

“I didn’t mean play like a kid’s game I meant like...I don’t know, anything like, maybe...Quidditch?” Damien decided that even if there was no team practise today, it was still a relatively good day to fly around for a bit.

Harry looked at Damien and then shook his head.

“No, I don’t want to.”

“Aww Harry come on, it’ll be fun.”

“Shove off Damien, stop annoying me.” Harry glared at Damien and tried to intimidate him into leaving but that never seemed to work with the thirteen year old.

“Look, just half an hour and then you can do whatever you want, promise. I just want to play one game with you.” Damien pleaded with Harry.

“Damien!” Harry tried to walk away from the teen but Damien was once again chasing after him like a puppy.

“One game, promise.”

Harry stopped and looked at Damien.

“Damien, you won’t enjoy playing with me.” Harry said a little resignedly.

“Of course I will!” Damien replied, glad that he had talked Harry around into playing Quidditch with him.

“No, Damien you don’t understand, I’ve never played Quidditch before.” Harry said without any emotions.

Damien stood still and just stared at his brother. Harry had never played Quidditch before! He didn’t know how to play Quidditch! How

was that possible? Everyone knew how to play Quidditch. It was just something you grew up knowing to do. It was a natural thing. Not everyone was good at it, mind you, but still it was normal for everyone to know how to play the Wizarding world's best sport. That was when it hit Damien. Harry didn't have a normal upbringing. He wasn't allowed to be a normal kid, who went to Quidditch games and played them in his back yard with his friends. 'Merlin, he probably doesn't even know how to ride a broom' Damien thought and his heart broke at the thought. Damien had played Quidditch from a very young age. His dad being so fanatical about the sport had encouraged him to play from the very beginning.

Damien looked at Harry and felt a lump at the back of his throat.

"You've...you've never played Quidditch before?" Damien asked wanting to be certain he hadn't misunderstood Harry.

"No, but it's not like I really care. It's just a stupid game with pointless flying around. I have better things to do with my time." Harry replied.

The next thing he knew Harry was being led out onto Hogwarts grounds. Harry was stunned into silence as Damien had held onto Harry's hand and had led him out through the main doors. Harry had never had anyone hold his hand like that. The gesture had shocked him into following Damien without really meaning to. Before Harry knew what was happening Damien had left him standing and had disappeared into a small building and had almost instantly reappeared holding two broomsticks.

He held out one to Harry and as Harry took it he saw the words 'Nimbus 3000' etched into the handle of the broom. Harry had the same one at home and his stomach jolted at the memory of home. He looked at the broom that Damien was holding and saw that it was quite old looking, compared to the Nimbus 3000. It had twigs sticking out at all angles and looked like it had been used by many people. The Nimbus in Harry's hands looked almost brand new. Not one twig was out of place and it was gleaming in the sunlight. Harry looked at Damien confused.

"Damien what...?"

"You ride on my Nimbus 3000. It's the newest model. Dad got it for me."

Harry looked at the tattered looking broom in Damien's hands.

"Don't worry, I'm just going to use the school's broom for today. It's a cleansweep 500, ancient thing but still does the job."

Damien was looking at Harry with a strange gleam in his eyes and at once Harry understood what had happened. Damien had misinterpreted Harry's answer about Quidditch. Harry had said that he never played Quidditch before, he didn't mean that he had never ridden on a broom before.

"Damien, listen you don't..." Harry was cut off by Damien.

"Harry, don't say anything. Just listen to me and you'll be flying better than everyone in no time." Damien said in a strange grown up voice.

It took everything in Harry's power not to laugh at Damien as he continued to explain the basic flying techniques. Harry just stood there, amused with how Damien was dictating the correct procedure to mount a broom and how to come back down to the ground.

"Okay Harry, you got that? Good. Now we'll start off slow. It can be a weird feeling but remember to hold on tight and you'll be fine. Okay?"

Harry had enough, he mounted his broom and waited for Damien to stop talking.

"Good Harry, now like I said, just bend your knees slightly and then kick off from the ground, not too hard though."

"Like this?" Harry asked before kicking off at an amazing speed that left Damien gaping at Harry with an open mouth.

Harry felt the amazing exhilaration that flying always brought to him. He had never played Quidditch before but he had been flying since he was six years old. His flying skill and style had saved his life when he was only seven years old. Harry felt the cold wind rush at him as he raced high up. Harry swooped down and did a couple of loops in

the air before zooming straight towards the goal hoops on the Quidditch grounds. Harry showed off his flying skills as he looped the goals at an amazing speed. Before he knew what was happening he felt something zoom beside him. He turned around to see Damien smiling as he came to hover near him.

“You jerk! You said that you had never ridden before!” Damien shouted at him, but he had a smile plastered over his face as he said it.

“No I didn’t! I said that I had never played Quidditch before, I didn’t say anything about flying. You just assumed that yourself.” Harry laughed back at him.

Damien came towards Harry to playfully attack him and Harry turned his broom around sharply and zoomed away from him. The two boys played chases, all the while laughing uncontrollably. They had not seen the small group of students that had gathered around to see the amazing flying of one Harry Potter. They also didn’t notice James standing a short distance away watching his two sons flying around and laughing at one another. James felt tears sting at his eyes as he imagined, that this was what life would have been like for Harry and Damien, if Wormtail hadn’t betrayed the Potters that fateful night.

Harry was the first to notice the large group of students standing below them. He signalled for Damien to stop flying and both boys landed back onto the grounds as swiftly as they could. Harry was met with applause as he touched the ground. Many students were asking him where he learned to fly like that and why he wasn’t on the school’s Quidditch team. Just then Hogwarts Quidditch teacher, Professor Hooch made her way over to Harry and Damien. She was looking at Harry as if he were made of Gold.

“Mr Potter, that was some exceptional flying. I must suggest that you come to the tryouts for the Gryffindor team this afternoon.”

Harry looked at her for a second before replying.

“Look, Madam Pooch...”

“It’s Hooch, Madame Hooch.” she corrected at once.

“Whatever, I don’t think that I would be very suited to play in a team, you see I don’t work well with others. I’m kind of an individual and I want to stay that way.” Harry gave her one of his smirks and started to walk away from her but Madame Hooch was not going to give up that easily.

“Oh, don’t worry about being an individual, after all Seekers usually are on their own during the game.”

Damien quickly spoke up at this.

“But Madame Hooch, we already have a Seeker, Ginny Weasley. We need a Chaser.”

“Mr Potter, Ms Weasley has requested to fill the position of Chaser since that was the position she originally wanted. The tryouts are to be for Gryffindor Seeker and I think that Mr Potter, here would be an excellent choice.”

Damien looked at Harry in awe, Professor Hooch never suggested anyone for Quidditch teams. She was not one to show any house any favouritism, but here she was suggesting Harry to be Gryffindor Seeker. There really wasn’t much more praise you could get from her. She looked at Harry once again before leaving.

“Think about it Mr Potter, it would be a waste of your talent if you decided against it, but the decision is yours.”

Harry was left standing and wondering how he had gotten into this mess and more importantly, how was he going to get himself out?

xxx

“Please Harry, please come to the tryouts, you really should try out for Seeker, you’re perfect.” Damien pleaded with Harry, back in the common room.

“No! You’re the reason I got into this mess in the first place. ‘One game Harry, only one’ now look what you’ve done!” Harry scolded him.

“Madame Hooch was right, you would be wasting your talent if you were not to try out. After all what’s the point in being an excellent flyer if you can’t play Quidditch?” Damien gave Harry another pleading look.

Harry put his head into his hands. He really didn’t want to play for Gryffindor, the more he wanted to distance himself from this house the more he was getting sucked in. His thoughts were interrupted again by Damien.

“Gryffindor haven’t won the cup in years Harry, with you on the team, we actually might have a chance in winning.”

At this Harry looked up at Damien.

“Who’s won so far?” he asked, knowing the answer already.

“Stinky Slytherin.” Damien said making a face.

Harry smiled to himself. There might be some good in him becoming Gryffindor seeker after all.

“Alright Damien, I’ll go to the stupid tryouts.” Harry said as he faked defeat in front of the dark haired boy.

Damien whooped with joy and ran towards the boys dormitory saying that he’ll get changed and then both of them can make their way to the tryouts.

Harry watched Damien leave and smiled to himself again.

As they neared the small group of people standing at the Quidditch ground Harry couldn’t help feel excited. All he needed was a couple of minutes and the Seeker position would be his. As Harry and Damien approached the stands Harry noticed the four Weasleys turn a shade of red.

“What’s he doing here?” Ron spat at Damien.

Harry only responded by raising his eyebrows at Ron but Damien started explaining right away.

“Harry’s going to try out as Seeker.”

This earned a good laugh from the four red heads and Damien could feel a blush creep into his cheeks.

“Piss off guys, you really don’t have a clue.” Damien said and then went to have a private word with Angelina.

Harry sat and watched the other kids fly around pathetically trying to catch the tiny golden ball. Harry couldn’t understand why they were all flying as they were in slow motion. It really wasn’t that difficult to see the ball.

At long last Harry was called and at once Damien had thrust the Nimbus 3000 in Harry’s hands once again. Harry watched as Ron’s eyes widened with shock. As Harry kicked off the ground he vaguely heard Ron say to Ginny,

“He never lets anyone touch that broom of his!”

Harry didn’t even try, he caught the golden snitch in record time, three times and came back to the ground, to see everyone looking at him in awe and shock. He saw Ginny look at him with a weird look on her face. Harry quickly ignored her and walked over to Angelina who nearly had tears of joy in her eyes.

She enthusiastically shook hands with Harry declaring him to be the new Quidditch seeker. Even the Weasleys couldn’t argue with her. There was nothing flawless with Harry’s flying. Ginny however was feeling very uneasy. Harry’s flying seemed very familiar and as she had watched him speed towards the snitch she had felt her stomach flip at the familiarity of him flying. She shook her head to clear her thoughts ‘it’s not possible, not possible at all.’ she told herself as she watched Harry shake hands with Angelina.

Harry headed back towards the castle with a chattering Damien next to him, going over the team’s strategies of how they were going to win the cup this year. Harry wasn’t even listening to him. Harry had been made Seeker for Gryffindor. Harry was lost in his own thoughts.

Chapter Twenty Two

The first Quidditch practise Harry attended was one that he would never forget. James had come to watch Harry practise. As Harry and Damien had walked into the changing rooms Harry at once knew that his playing in the Gryffindor team was not going to be easy. The three Weasley boys were glaring at him and the twins were holding the beaters bats threateningly in their hands. Harry only gave them a cheeky wink and went to get changed. They didn't scare Harry in the least, he had dealt with far more frightening things in his life.

Just as Harry had taken off his robes and was reaching for his Quidditch robes, which Lily had rushed off to buy in Hogsmeade, the door opened and in walked the team captain and the only other girl player, Ginny Weasley. The two girls had obviously been getting dressed in the other changing rooms and had now come in to give the team its pep talk.

At first Harry didn't realise what the two girls were staring at. Then he realised that he was standing topless, holding his Quidditch robes in his hands. Angelina and Ginny were shamelessly gawking at Harry's well toned chest and muscles. Harry smiled at them and slipped on his robes. Angelina and Ginny seemed to snap out of their gaze at the sight of Harry slipping on his clothes. The girls looked at each other and turned red. Neither girl was able to look at Harry without blushing for the next few minutes.

After the pep talk, Angelina led her team out onto the Quidditch field. Harry at once kicked off from the ground. He was once again riding Damien's Nimbus 3000. Harry had tried to get Damien to keep his broom. He didn't like the feeling of borrowing anything from Damien, but the teen had insisted that Harry should use the Nimbus, since it was vital he had a fast broom to catch the snitch. Harry had raced to the top so that he could survey the entire field. Harry couldn't see the golden ball anywhere. He watched as the team started throwing the Quaffle around and Ron tried his best to block the three hoops on his end of the field. Harry watched Damien fly around on the Cleansweep 500. Even though the broom was very old and not very good, Damien flew pretty well. Harry watched him fly and felt a strange feeling rise in his chest. It was a feeling he had never felt before. Was it pride?

Harry shook his head. He hated it when Damien made Harry feel any emotions for him. Harry began zooming around trying to find the golden ball.

From the corner of his eye Harry saw something zoom right at him. Harry only managed to fly out of the way as a Bludger came crashing towards him. He looked angrily at the person who had aimed it at him. He saw the smirking face of Fred Weasley. Harry cursed, he knew they would be stupid enough to attack him in the middle of flying. How stupid could they be? At once Angelina came flying over to Fred and started shouting at him. Even as his twin was being told off for attacking Harry, George sent the Bludger straight for Harry again. Harry was ready this time. He flew forward and turned his broom sharply around so that the tail of the Nimbus hit the oncoming Bludger and sent it flying straight at George, who only just managed to duck out of the way. Harry sent one of his evil smirks at George, who seemed to go red at his failed attempt in hurting Harry.

Harry saw Damien zoom up towards George and have a heated argument with him. Ron and Ginny were also distracted and it seemed that the game had been stopped. Angelina turned around to see Damien shouting at George for attacking Harry. That was enough. Angelina blew the small whistle around her neck and told everyone to fly back down to the ground. Practise was stopped until she could figure out why there was so much animosity towards Harry. Before anyone could stop him, Fred sent another Bludger flying at Harry. He didn't really aim at Harry, he was just so mad at being told off by Angelina that he just took a wild swing at the zooming Bludger. Harry at once zoomed out of the way, furious that he was being aimed at again. However nobody quite realised that at that very moment Ginny was flying towards the ground. When Harry moved out of the way, the Bludger caught an unsuspecting Ginny and hit her broom, causing her to be thrown off. Ginny screamed as she felt herself being thrown off her broom so violently. She was falling down, she would defiantly break her neck as she was falling from a great height.

Harry reacted without thinking. As soon as he heard Ginny scream he bolted towards her. A sense of Déjà vu overwhelming him as he sped towards the falling red haired girl. He zoomed towards her and the ground, aware that if he didn't catch her in time, he would have quite

a nasty accident along with her, as he wouldn't be able to pull out of the dive he was in just now. Harry reached out and grabbed the girl around her waist and at the same time pulled out of the dive, just in time.

Ginny had closed her eyes and only opened them when she felt strong hands grab at her waist. She was pulled against a strong chest and her head was at once buried into her saviour's chest. Ginny looked up at who had saved her. Brilliant green eyes met her brown ones and Ginny felt her heart stop. Harry was looking at her, in that exact same way he had, five months ago. Again Ginny felt tears well up in her eyes. There was no doubt about it now, Harry was her mysterious saviour. He was the one that had risked his own life, twice now, to save her. Ginny tore her eyes away from him as they reached the ground. Ginny felt so ashamed at how she had been treating Harry. Harry dismounted from the broom and gently placed Ginny on the ground where she sat, shaking. Harry heard the other five players landing as well and running towards them. Harry stepped away as the three Weasley boys swept their sister into their arms and were almost in tears. They kept on saying how sorry they were. Angelina and Damien were also trying to comfort the shaken girl. James was there instantly and at once started telling Fred off for being so careless. Ginny backed away from all the comforting arms and looked for Harry.

That was when they all realised that Harry had left. Damien and James looked around amazed that Harry has slipped past them. The three Weasley boys were looking very ashamed indeed. The one person they had tormented had ended up saving their sister.

"Where is Harry?" James asked, looking at Damien.

"I don't know. He just disappeared." Damien looked over at the changing rooms hoping to catch a glimpse of his brother.

"I'll go look for him." Angelina said as she hurried over to the changing rooms.

"It...it was him." Ginny stammered in a voice that was almost a whisper.

“Who?” Ron asked while trying to rub her shoulders, Ginny was trembling from head to foot.

“Him...Ron, it was Harry. He saved me!” Ginny couldn’t get her teeth to stop chattering.

“I know Gin, we all saw him. He just bolted for you. I’ve never seen anyone fly that fast.” Ron said looking a little awestruck.

James tried to pull Damien away and let the four brothers and sister have some time together. They were all sitting on the damp ground, but James figured that he would give them a minute or two to get over the shock, before instructing them to get up to the castle.

“No, Ron I...I’m not talking about today. It was Harry! The boy who saved me from the roof, in Hogsmeade, it was him Ron. It was Harry!” Ginny was in hysterics now.

The three Weasley boys looked at each other in shock. It wasn’t possible. James and Damien shared a look of disbelief as well. Ginny was probably just in shock.

“Gin, you probably just had a sense of Déjà vu. I mean you were in the same kind of situation, so it’s natural to think that both people saving you were the same, its okay, Ginny.” Damien tried to comfort her.

Ginny stood up all of a sudden. Fury etched on her face.

“I’m telling you! It was him! I told you I would recognise him. I thought it was him when I first met him but after realising who he was I thought it wasn’t possible. But just now, the way he looked at me and they way he grabbed me. I have no doubt! It was him Harry was the one who saved me.”

James decided it was time they all went up to the castle. This wasn’t the kind of talk that should happen outside. He prompted everyone to get up to the castle where they could continue to discuss this.

Once the four Weasley children, Damien and James were seated comfortably in James’ living quarters, James asked Ginny to explain.

After listening to her version of the events James had decided that it was a possibility that Harry had saved her, five months ago in Hogsmeade.

“Are you sure that the boy was wearing a silver mask?” James asked Ginny.

Ginny nodded her head.

“Then it probably was Harry for certain, since he always wore a silver mask when he was outside.” James informed the five teens sitting before him.

“Why?” asked George.

“Well, I guess it was because You-Know-Who didn’t want anyone to see Harry and recognise him, especially as my son.” James replied and the five teens could detect a note of hurt in his voice.

“That’s awful, Harry had to wear a mask every time he went out. That’s just cruel.” Ron said.

Damien looked at his friend curiously. Damien knew how much resentment Ron felt towards Harry. Damien realised that Ron was probably feeling guilty for hating Harry, since now it was apparent that Ron’s sister owed her life to Harry.

“I know, but that’s in the past now. It is very interesting that Harry saved you Ginny, but now that I think about it, it does make sense.” James replied.

“How does any of this make sense?” Fred asked looking confusedly at James.

“Well, Harry did save Madame Pomfrey’s children from Death eaters so I guess it shouldn’t be that hard to believe that he saved Ginny as well.”

The five teens at once started firing questions at James about what happened and how Harry had saved Madame Pomfrey’s children. James laughed at the looks on their faces and replied that the

specific details weren't important. What was important was finding Harry.

James decided that he was going to have a word with Dumbledore about this. Things were looking better and better for Harry's freedom.

xxx

Ginny found Hermione in the common room, surrounded by her usual ten books, all opened and scattered around her. Ginny ran over to her and quickly told her about what had happened with Harry and herself at Quidditch practise. To say Hermione was shocked was an understatement. Her usual bushy brown hair seemed to stand on end as she listened to Ginny. At first she didn't believe her, but after listening to Damien and Ron repeat the incident with the school nurse's children, Hermione finally, grudgingly gave in. She didn't look happy about the saviour being Harry though. No one could blame her.

The three teens went down to have some dinner. As they entered the hall they spotted the messy haired teen right away. Ginny made her way over to him, all the while trying to get heart to stop beating so fast. She sat across from him, Harry didn't look at her. Ginny took a deep breath and looked straight at him.

"Harry?"

Harry looked at her, with an emotionless expression.

"Why didn't you say anything?" Ginny almost whispered, unable to keep her voice free from emotion.

Harry smirked at her and let his spoon drop onto his plate.

"Miss Weasley, according to you I couldn't possibly be someone you would know, so why should I have bothered correcting you? What possible difference would that have made to you?"

"Difference? It would have made all the difference in the world. Merlin Harry, you saved my life! I wanted to thank you." Ginny couldn't believe Harry thought it was pointless to point out this fact.

Harry looked speechless for a moment before regaining his composure.

"Well, I don't need any thanks, especially from you!" he said harshly.

"You can pretend all you like, Harry but I can see that you are affected. You risked your life in order to save me. You can't expect me to believe that you would take that lightly." Ginny smiled at Harry's angry looking face.

"Don't get any silly ideas, Weasley! Just because I saved you doesn't mean I won't enjoy destroying you later."

Harry smiled at the look of shock on the red haired girl's face. She seemed to struggle for words in response to Harry's threat.

"You can threaten me all you like Harry, but you don't save someone twice, just so that you can destroy them. It makes no sense."

"Who said that making sense was important to me?" Harry smirked back at her.

Ginny decided that talking to the raven haired boy, when he was in this type of mood was pointless. She got up and walked away from him without saying another word. Ginny was replaced by Ron and Damien. Harry took a deep breath. He was starting to get a headache.

"What?" he snapped at the two Gryffindors.

"I just wanted to say...that I owe you a thank you for saving my sisters life and..." Ron paused and gave Damien a funny look. After getting a nod from the younger boy Ron continued "...and I wanted to say that I'm sorry...about the whole attacking you thing. I shouldn't have attacked you. I'm sorry."

It was evident that these words had caused the red haired boy much pain to say to Harry. Harry relished them. He gave Damien a calculating look. Harry knew that this was his doing. But Harry wasn't going to make life any easier for the two boys.

"Apology...not accepted." Harry said slowly to Ron.

Ron's head snapped up and he looked in surprise at Harry. Damien was the first to speak.

"Harry, what are you saying?"

Harry turned calmly to his brother.

"I'm saying that I couldn't give two hoots about him, his sister or his ridiculous apology! Just because I didn't want to see her splattered on the ground in a bloody mess, doesn't mean that I have any sort of compassion for her, or any of you for that matter."

Harry greedily drank their horrified expressions before getting up and making his way from the table.

'Now that felt good!' Harry thought to himself as he made his way up to his dormitory.

xxx

The next few days went by. Harry wasn't bothered by any of the Weasley family. When Harry was training for the Quidditch game was the only time he saw Ginny. She would always make a conscious effort to say hello to Harry, which he promptly ignored. He noticed that despite his harsh words, the Weasley boys were still a lot nicer to Harry. Damien was his usual self, constantly annoying Harry. Harry didn't know he had so much patience in him, that he managed not to seriously harm the annoying kid.

The first time that Harry met up with Draco, after being made Gryffindor Seeker was something that Harry would never forget either. He met him in the Library, just before dinner, as it was the busiest then. Harry always said that if you didn't want to be overheard then go somewhere where there are lots of people. That way everyone is too busy with their own conversations, to pay any attention to you. Even with the annoying Librarian, Madame Pince, present the Library was always surrounded by whispering students.

Draco glared at Harry as he sat down next to him.

“What happened Draco? Why are you looking so depressed? Forgot your hair gelling spell?” Harry teased.

“Shut up, Harry! How could you do that to me? First the duel and now this!” Draco was infuriated as he spoke to Harry.

“For once, Draco could you make sense when talking?” Harry responded.

“How could you become Seeker for Gryffindor? I can’t believe you! First you give me a thrashing in that duel, even though I’m your best friend! Then, you go and become a filthy Seeker! You know what I think? I think you’re enjoying Hogwarts too much, and I think you’re enjoying being a Gryffindor as you’re doing them proud!”

Draco instantly realised how far he had gone with that last statement. He looked somewhat fearfully at Harry, all anger vanished from his grey eyes.

Harry had his teeth clenched and his hands were curled into fists. Draco could see how hard Harry was clenching his fists, as his knuckles had turned white.

“First of all, Draco you should thank all your Gods that you **are** my best friend, otherwise such words would have resulted in your premature and very horrific death! Secondly, the duel as all your doing! You’re the one that tried to hit me with a stinging hex and two hexes at once. I only defended myself. Thirdly, don’t go around making your own assumptions. You should know me by now. If I became a Seeker for Gryffindor then you can bet there is a very good reason.”

Draco looked a lot calmer now and he muttered his apologies.

“So, why did you become Seeker?” Draco asked.

“You’ll find out at the game.” Harry simply answered.

“No Harry, please. You’ve got to tell me. I’m the Slytherin Seeker and there’s no way I’m competing with you again, in anything!” Draco cried helplessly.

Harry couldn't help laugh at the look of utter despair on his friend's face.

"Don't worry, Draco. Just prepare for the game, make sure you're on top form. Leave the rest to me."

With that said Harry left the Library, leaving a very distraught Draco behind.

xxx

It was two days before the big game between Gryffindor and Slytherin and all Harry seem to do was practise. There were practises running near enough every night and Harry was beginning to respect the team captain for her dedication. Angelina Johnson could be very intimidating at times. Harry was glad that James had stopped coming to the practises as Harry couldn't stand having him so close by all the time.

Harry, Damien and Ron were making their way back from one of the evening practises. Damien was trying to explain all the different tactics that had been used against Slytherin in the past and that were now useless against the Slytherin team. Harry could usually tune Damien out but tonight was different. For some reason Harry just couldn't block Damien out.

The three boys were just approaching the stairs that would lead them to the Gryffindor common room. Harry could see the portrait of the Fat Lady in the distance when suddenly he felt the familiar dull ache in his head begin to intensify.

Damien only realised that something was wrong when he heard Harry murmur something to himself, something that sounded like 'no, not now'. Damien turned around just in time to see Harry grab his forehead and instantly collapse onto his knees.

"Harry!" Damien yelled and ran towards him. Ron whipped around at hearing Damien yell and darted towards Harry and Damien.

Harry was on his knees as he gasped out in pain. He could hear Damien shouting and asking him what was wrong, but Harry couldn't

speak, due to the intense pain. Harry had never felt anything so painful in his life. His scar was on fire, his head was pounding and Harry felt that his head was surely going to split into two. His scar had never burnt so fiercely before.

Damien grabbed hold of Harry's arms and tried to determine what was wrong. He could see Harry's eyes were shut tightly and he was desperately trying not to scream out in agony. Damien felt close to panic. 'What was wrong? What happened?'

Harry couldn't take it anymore and let out an anguished scream as he felt the pain in his scar worsen. Damien was also on his knees and was facing Harry when he saw the trickle of blood seep down from Harry's nose. That was enough to make Damien's heart leap into his mouth, he turned to face Ron who was crouching over the both of them.

"Ron! Go get my dad! Hurry, Ron!"

Ron instantly turned and ran to James' living quarters. Damien was trying to help Harry but was at a loss of what to do. Thankfully Ron had ran into James at the stairs and quickly told him what had happened.

Damien looked up to see James running over to them. He sighed in relief. His dad was here, he would be able to help Harry. As soon as James reached his two sons he took in the terrible sight of Harry on the floor, blood dripping from his nose. Harry was moaning in what sounded like terrible pain. Harry looked close to passing out.

"Merlin! What happened, Harry! Harry, are you alright? What happened?" James was leaning over Harry, trying to see what was wrong.

"I don't know! He was fine a minute ago and then all of a sudden he grabbed his forehead and collapsed! His nose started bleeding! I don't know how." Damien told his father quickly.

James panicked. He had seen this before. The very first time he had seen Harry, after his capture, back at Grimmauld place. Harry had been in a lot of pain but he didn't have any nosebleeds. James

couldn't take the sight of Harry in pain. He quickly gathered his eldest son in his arms and bolted to the infirmary. James would probably not have been able to lift him so easily but the sight of his son bleeding and in agonising pain, had caused a rush of Adrenaline in James.

James burst through the doors of the infirmary, with Damien and Ron close behind.

"Poppy! Poppy help!" James yelled.

At once the school nurse came bustling out of her office.

"Mr Potter, what's the...oh no! Harry! What happened?" Poppy quickly rushed over and helped James put Harry onto the nearest bed.

Harry had now passed out from the pain and lay motionless on the hospital bed.

"It's his scar, Poppy!" James told her while she ran her wand over the unconscious boy.

"It's never done that before." Poppy murmured to herself, referring to the nosebleed, but James heard her.

"What do you mean by, 'before'? Do you mean that time at the Headquarters?" James had a feeling that Poppy had referred to a time other than that occasion.

Poppy averted her gaze and started to pull small vials from her bag, no doubt for Harry.

"Poppy?" James said, waiting for an answer.

Poppy sighed as she looked up to meet his eyes.

"No, I mean by the last two times he had come to see me."

James stood there, motionless. Harry had suffered more attacks like these before. Where was James at those times? How did he not notice that Harry had been suffering?

“When?” he asked, unable to say more as he felt his voice choked with emotion.

“The last time was about a week ago. He came to see me both times at night, around 11pm. I was surprised he didn’t get caught, but he was in too much pain. He came so that I could give him some pain relief potion.” Poppy answered as she slipped some blue coloured potion down the unconscious boy’s throat.

James couldn’t believe it. Harry had been suffering and James didn’t even know about it. ‘Some father I am.’ he thought bitterly to himself.

He noticed at that point that Damien and Ron were still standing near the door, unsure of whether they should come in or not. James quickly went over to them and convinced Damien to go and get his mother. Damien and Ron left the infirmary and James hurried over to Harry and Poppy.

Harry still hadn’t come around and James was getting increasingly worried.

“Poppy, what happened? Why is he not awake yet?”

Poppy looked at James with tired eyes.

“Mr Potter, I think its best that Professor Dumbledore does the explanations, he understands better than me.”

James looked completely lost now.

“Professor Dumbledore? How would he know what’s wrong with Harry? I don’t understand.”

As if on cue, Professor Dumbledore arrived with a very worried looking Lily. James was glad to see that Ron and Damien were not with them.

“James! What happened? Damien said that Harry collapsed! What’s going on?” Lily asked as she hurried over to James and Harry.

James put his arms around Lily in a comforting gesture, instantly calming the somewhat distraught mother. They both looked helplessly at Harry as he lay motionless on the bed.

Professor Dumbledore spoke for the first time, since coming into the room.

"I think it best we go into the office. Poppy would you like to join us?"

Poppy shook her head.

"No, Headmaster. I'll wait here in case Harry wakes up."

The two parents along with the Headmaster went into Poppy's office.

Once they were all seated James spoke again.

"What's going on, Dumbledore? Is Harry sick? Poppy said he was in to see her twice since he's been here, what's the matter with him?"

Professor Dumbledore gave James and Lily a long look, as if determining if they would be able to take the truth.

"James, Lily, I really wanted to tell you this once I had more information, but the circumstances have meant that you both must be told now. I wish I had better news."

At this point both James and Lily could feel their hearts thumping loudly in their chests. Fear rose inside them.

"Dumbledore, please just tell us what's going on?" Lily said in a shaky voice.

Dumbledore brought his midnight blue eyes to Lily's emerald green ones, he took a deep sigh.

"You remember the Prophecy?" he asked the two parents.

James almost snorted at the question. Of course he remembered the Prophecy. That damn Prophecy ruined their lives, took away their son and was responsible for the heartbreak they were going through with Harry every day.

“You will remember that it states that ‘neither can live while the other survives’. Well I’m afraid Harry’s condition is in reference to that part of the Prophecy. You see the pain that Harry experiences originates from his scar, the same scar that was given to him by Voldemort. Now as I had expected, the scar is what marked Harry as an equal. By giving that scar to Harry, Voldemort marked Harry not only his heir but his own downfall. ‘The Dark Lord will mark him as an equal’. But I think the significance of where the actual scar is situated on Harry’s body is important.”

Dumbledore paused here, trying to summon strength to tell the two parents the next part.

“The scar is on the left side of his forehead. It is not only imprinted on his forehead but his very soul, to his life source, in other words, the scar is directly linked to Harry’s heart.”

Dumbledore paused again to let James and Lily fully digest what he had said.

“Now, the pain that Harry experiences is when Voldemort feels particularly happy or angry. At least that is what Harry has told Poppy. Harry also said that the pain was at its strongest when he was physically near Voldemort. If Harry was far away from Voldemort then it didn’t matter how angry Voldemort got, it didn’t affect Harry. However, as the Prophecy dictates, Harry and Voldemort cannot co exist at the one time, so it is my assumption that the pain is intensifying in Harry. Harry is being weakened, as he is not of age yet, Voldemort is the more dominant one, so it is Harry who is suffering. However painful these attacks have been in the past, I don’t think Harry has ever lost consciousness before, so I think that it is correct to assume that these attacks are becoming stronger and more painful.”

“So what does this mean? How can we fix this?” James asked, while he felt the dread building in the pit of his stomach, as he saw at the grave look Dumbledore gave him.

“There is nothing we can do. I’m sorry James, Lily. There is no way to reverse the spell that Voldemort cast. Like I said the scar is not only

on Harry's body, it is imprinted on his mind and soul. The scar has a connection to his heart. It is irreversible."

James exploded at his.

"What do you mean? It's irreversible! Nothing is irreversible when it comes to magic. Can't you give him a potion, or isn't there a spell you can do?" James knew even as he was shouting that it was hopeless. If there was a cure, Dumbledore would have found it.

Lily was sitting quietly, tears of angst were slowly making their way down her cheeks.

"I am truly sorry, James." Dumbledore said, giving James a sympathetic look.

"So what can we do?" Lily asked quietly.

"The only thing that would release Harry from this torment would be the demise of Voldemort." Dumbledore explained.

James and Lily sat in shocked silence.

"If...if Harry doesn't kill You-Know-Who then what will happen to him?" Lily asked, fearing the answer.

"I am afraid that if Harry doesn't fulfil the Prophecy, then the pain he feels will only grow. If the pain continues to grow and intensify like it has been doing then very soon Harry's heart and body will not be able to take the strain. I'm afraid that if Harry doesn't kill Voldemort, the agony caused by the scar, will probably kill Harry." Dumbledore finished sadly.

James stood up, unable to stay seated anymore. He took to pacing in front of the Headmaster, running his fingers through his messy locks, trying desperately to keep the tears at bay. 'How could this be happening?'

"Do you think that You-Know-Who is aware of this?" He asked all of a sudden. For some reason James wanted to know.

“I don’t believe that he is. He doesn’t know that this pain will probably kill Harry in due time. From what Harry had told Poppy, Voldemort tries hard not to get upset when Harry is around. The reason Harry has been suffering here at Hogwarts is because Voldemort doesn’t realise that the pain has intensified so much, that Harry no longer has to be physically near Voldemort for him to suffer.”

James nodded his head once at Dumbledore. It was a strange concept, to think that the most evil wizard of all time was actually caring to keep his temper in check for Harry. ‘He’s still killing him though’ James’ mind screamed at him.

Before he could say anything to the Headmaster he heard Harry’s voice from the next room. At once the three adults rushed to the hospital wing.

Harry was attempting to get out of bed while a protesting Poppy was trying to convince him to stay in bed.

“For God’s sake, Poppy, I told you I’m fine. I’m not staying the night! I’m fine, let me go.” Harry was saying as he tried to pry Poppy’s fingers from his arm.

“Harry! You collapsed! You have blood all over you. Let me check you to see if there is any other damage done.”

James and Lily felt fresh tears sting their eyes. There was of course damage done, and there was more on its way if Harry didn’t change his mind about Voldemort.

Harry stopped for a second, as soon as Poppy let of his arm to check him, Harry leapt out of bed.

“Harry! Get back right now!” Poppy exclaimed.

“I’m fine, Merlin you’re worse than Bella.” Harry said without thinking.

At once Poppy’s face turned white and she fought to control herself.

“Sorry” muttered Harry, “but you are though, both of you treat me like I’m made of glass, it’s insulting.”

Chapter Twenty Three

It was a cold grey morning in late October, as Harry dragged himself from his bed to get washed up. Today was the big day, the match between Gryffindor and Slytherin. Harry washed up and came back to his room to get changed. Neville was getting dressed and as usual tried to make small talk with him. Harry still ignored him and focused on getting dressed.

“Good Luck for the game today, Harry.” Neville said before leaving the room.

Harry tried not to get annoyed, he didn’t need luck. He knew exactly what he was going to do. Harry was surprised when Damien came running at him, showing off his new Nimbus 3000 broom.

“Harry look! Look what dad got me! Isn’t it cool, now both of us have got a Nimbus, wow Harry, we’re definitely going to win now!”

Harry had tried to give Damien his Nimbus 3000 back but Damien wouldn’t take it back, insisting that Harry needed a faster broom. James had obviously felt that Damien deserved a new broom and so bought him one. Harry tried not to point out how spoilt Damien was while he watched Damien fuss over his new broom. Slowly the two boys made their way to the Quidditch pitch.

The crowd at the Quidditch pitch was bigger than Harry had ever seen before. ‘Where did all these people come from?’ he thought to himself as he left the changing room with the rest of the Gryffindor Quidditch team. Harry felt his heart race at the sight of so many students and Professors.

Harry came and stood near the other Gryffindor players. He watched as Angelina moved forward to the centre of the field where a bulky looking Slytherin was approaching her. Harry surveyed the Slytherin players. All of them were boys and most of them were very bulky looking, like their team captain. Draco was easily the smallest and youngest in the team. Harry kept a straight face as his eyes locked with Draco’s. The Slytherin boy was trying to keep his face in a fixed sneer, but it faltered slightly as his gaze met Harry’s. Harry looked away and focused on what he was going to do.

As the whistle was blown by Madame Hooch there was an instant roar of cheers as the fourteen players zoomed into the air. The first two players to reach the air were Harry and Damien. Damien looked over at Harry and gave him a wink as he whizzed over to Ginny to get the Quaffle from her. Harry was soon joined by Draco. They looked at each other for an instant before speeding away in different directions. Harry watched as the Quaffle was viciously snatched from Ginny by a Slytherin. Harry watched with pleasure as Slytherin scored, not even one minute into the game. The crowd of silver and green, below Harry, gave a tremendous cheer. Harry saw Damien bolt across to catch the Quaffle and proceeded to his end of the field to score. Harry was amazed at the speed Damien was flying at. Within seconds Damien had dodged two Slytherins and a bludger, to deliver a fantastic goal. Harry could just make out the voice of Lee Jordan, a seventh year Gryffindor, who was the commentator for the match. Lee announced the score, 10 to 10. The swarm of students wearing their red and gold colours gave a thundering applause to the thirteen year old.

Harry felt the warm feeling of pride travel from the pit of his stomach to his chest, as he watched the thirteen year old outwit boys, four years older than him. Harry gave himself another mental shake. 'Why am I feeling proud of Damien?' Harry thought to himself.

Harry decided it was time for the first blow to Gryffindor. He surveyed the players below him and targeted Angelina. She was the fastest player, she had to be first. Without warning Harry took off in the opposite direction as Angelina. As he had expected Draco was following him instantly. Harry swerved to the right and Draco followed him. Harry hoped Draco had taken Harry's words to heart. Harry had told him the night before to play the game as they normally would, which meant that the Slytherin beaters had to aim at the Gryffindor seeker. Other than Draco, no one else in Slytherin knew of Harry's true identity, so all Draco had to do was keep out of the way and let his team mates play dirty with Harry.

Harry took a sharp turn as he heard Lee telling the crowd that Harry must have seen the snitch as he was bolting across the field. Harry smiled to himself. He was now speeding towards an unsuspecting Angelina. From the corner of his eye Harry saw Crabbe send a

crashing bludger towards him. 'Perfect' thought Harry. He increased his speed and at the last moment, before the bludger caught the tail of Harry's broom, Harry went into a deep dive. It happened exactly as Harry has planned.

The bludger went crashing into Angelina, causing the girl to barely manage to stay on her broom. She cried out in pain as her arm took most of the impact of the bludger attack. The Gryffindor team was instantly at her side, including Harry. Angelina told everyone she was fine, and to get back to the game. During this attack Slytherin had managed to score another goal.

The score was now 20-10 to Slytherin. As the game progressed, Gryffindor managed to keep near to Slytherins score. After one hour the score had reached 60-50 to Slytherin. Angelina had slowed down immensely. Draco had taken Harry's example and had managed to get Ginny injured in much the same way as Angelina, by Fred's bludger. That meant that Gryffindor was two chasers down. Damien was the only chaser that hadn't had an 'accident'. Harry had motioned to Draco not to harm Damien as he didn't see the need for all of Gryffindors chasers to be hurt.

Since the beaters were meant to target the other teams' players, there was not much that Madame Hooch could do about the attacks on Gryffindors' chasers. But she kept a close eye on the Slytherin team since they were known to play dirty.

Harry hadn't even looked for the Golden Snitch and Draco was too busy following Harry to pay much attention. The score was getting better for Slytherin, 80-60.

A very harassed Angelina flew up to Harry,

"Harry, get the snitch and end this disaster before it gets any worse!" she told him in a pained voice.

Harry nodded his head as he surveyed the grounds.

'Yes, let's end it now.' he smirked to himself.

Just then Harry saw it, the tiny golden ball, fluttering near one of the goal posts. Harry took off at an amazing speed. Draco was only moments behind him. At this point everyone had their eyes set on the two house seekers as they all spotted the flying snitch. Harry sped towards the fleeing ball. Draco came next to Harry, both boys were flying at break neck speed, trying to get to the snitch in time. The golden snitch seemed to realise that it was going to be ripped in two, as it was flying away from the oncoming seekers, at an amazing speed of its own.

Harry and Draco swerved to the right, never letting the golden ball out of their sight. Both boys were now going into a deep dive, in attempt to grab the snitch. Draco and Harry both reached out, Harry's fingers were inches away from grasping the golden ball. His fingers felt the fluttering of the tiny wings. That was when Harry made his decision. He looked over to Draco and met his worried grey eyes. Harry smirked at his friend before pulling out of the dive just as Draco grabbed the struggling ball in his hand. Draco looked almost surprised as he touched the ground and held up his hand, holding the still struggling snitch. Harry hovered in the air for a moment, fully taking in the horrified gasps from the crowd and from the six players around him. Harry touched the ground and dismounted from his broom. The Slytherin team were clapping and cheering as the crowd went crazy with joy. The Gryffindors, Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff students looked like they couldn't believe their eyes. Many had seen Harry training with the team and knew that he was brilliant at flying. What had happened? He was so close to catching the snitch! What had made him lose at the last moment?

Harry was surrounded by the devastated looking Gryffindor players. Angelina came storming over to him, accompanied by Fred, George and Ron.

"What the hell happened?" shrieked Angelina.

Harry kept his face neutral.

"What can I say? Malfoy was just faster, I guess."

"Dragon shit!" Ron yelled. Harry turned to look at him calmly.

"Malfoy wasn't faster at catching that bloody snitch! You let him!" Ron continued to yell.

"Ron!" Angelina scolded looking livid with such an allegation.

"Come off it Angie, you can't tell me you didn't see it. He pulled out of the dive just as Malfoy grabbed the snitch! Harry *let* the Slytherins win!" Ron said.

Angelina looked shocked. She turned to Harry, as if to get confirmation as to what Ron was saying was true or not. Harry remained quiet, enjoying the angst he had created for these Gryffindors.

"It makes sense." Fred joined in.

"Not you to, Fred." Angelina turned to him.

"Come on Angie, don't you think it's a little odd that the only chaser not to get attacked during the game was his brother." George continued.

At this though, Harry's eyes flashed dangerously at the twins but he remained quiet. It was then that Harry noticed that Damien was not standing with the rest of them. Harry looked behind him and saw Damien and Ginny both standing at the other end of the field. Ginny was looking close to tears as she watched the Slytherins rejoice their victory. She was holding her shoulder awkwardly and seemed to be in pain. But it was Damien's expression that caused Harry's heart to skip a beat. Damien wasn't looking at the rejoicing Slytherins, he was looking straight at Harry with a betrayed look on his young face. He was clutching his broom in one hand and was staring, unblinkingly over at Harry's direction.

Harry watched with a sinking heart as Damien tore his eyes away from him and walked away from the Quidditch grounds. Harry cursed under his breath. He hadn't fully thought about Damien's reaction. It didn't seem important then, so why was Harry feeling upset at Damien's reaction now?

xxx

The atmosphere in the Gryffindor common room was such that you would have thought that they hadn't lost a Quidditch match but a war. In a way, that wasn't far from the truth. Since the beginning, Slytherin and Gryffindor never got on with one another. Their house rivalry was the cause of much trouble around Hogwarts. With the very first match against Slytherin lost, it was like losing a war with Slytherin. What was more, they lost 230-60 points. That would mean that Gryffindor would be out of the running for the Quidditch cup this year as they were in the last place. The miserable Gryffindors sat lost in depressed thoughts. How were they going to face the Slytherins now?

Harry couldn't believe the depressing mood around him. He had thought that the Gryffindors would mope around but this was just unbelievable. The students were actually mourning the loss. Some idiots even had tears in their eyes! Harry wished he could enjoy their misery but he couldn't. All because of one snotty nosed, spoiled brat named Damien.

Harry couldn't find him anywhere. He didn't really know what he was going to say to him, Harry wasn't even sure why he wanted to speak to him, but he knew that he needed to exchange some words to the young Potter. Unlike the Weasley boys, all the other Gryffindors thought that Harry had played genuinely well and that this time Draco Malfoy had all the luck. Harry was silently ridiculing their stupidity. He had purposely sabotaged their chance at winning the cup and he had done it right in front of them, yet they still couldn't see the truth.

Slowly the common room emptied and soon there was only Harry left, sitting next to the roaring fire. The portrait door opened and Harry looked up to see a very upset looking Damien stumble through, into the common room. Damien didn't notice Harry at first, but as he neared the stairs leading to the boys dormitory, he looked over to see the sitting form of Harry. Damien stopped walking and stared at Harry.

Harry watched as many emotions flickered over the teens face. Harry had never seen anyone so upset. 'Merlin, it's only a game, what are they all going to be like once they lose the war with father?' thought Harry to himself. He stood up and walked towards Damien.

“Damien, I ...” Harry was cut off by Damien’s outstretched hand.

Harry looked at Damien as he gestured to Harry to stop talking. Harry wasn’t even sure why he obeyed the younger boy. Maybe it was the look of absolute anger and hurt that was on the teen’s face, it caught him off guard.

“Don’t Harry, just don’t.” Damien said, in a strange strained voice.

Harry just watched, completely taken aback by this unusual behaviour by Damien. The thirteen year old gave Harry another hurtful glare and then turned around to leave the room.

“Damien, listen...” Harry started again but was once again cut off by Damien.

“No! I don’t want to listen to anything you’ve got to say!” Damien screamed at him.

Harry was more shocked at the tears glistening in Damien’s eyes more than his raised voice. Harry didn’t understand why Damien was making this such a big deal.

“Merlin Damien, why are you so upset? It was only a game.” asked Harry.

At this Damien lost whatever little control he had over his temper.

“I don’t give a hoot about the bloody game! I don’t care that we lost!”

“Then why are you angry?” Harry shouted back at the teen.

“Because you betrayed me! You had a choice today, Harry. You could’ve helped your friend or you could’ve stuck with your brother, and you went against me. That’s what I’m upset about.”

Harry stood, motionless, listening to Damien. He understood now, why Damien was getting so angry. He saw what Harry did today as a betrayal of trust, which it was to an extent.

“You know what Harry, ever since I found out that I had a big brother, all I wanted was to be close to him, like Ron was to his brothers. But I knew that with everything you’d gone through, you’d be quite hard to talk to. That it was going to take time for you to open up. That’s why I took all the crap you gave me. That’s why I made excuses for you, to convince others as well as myself that you weren’t all bad.” Harry stood still, unable to speak as Damien poured out all his feelings.

“The first time I met you, you treated me like shit! But I disregarded it, thinking that you probably were in shock about finding out you had a brother. The first day you arrived at Hogwarts, you insulted my best friends. Friends that are like family to me! You called Hermione such a foul name and you attacked Ron because he stood up for her. I still disregarded that, convinced my friends not to report the abuse, because I was still naïve enough to make excuses for you, you didn’t have a wand, you were only defending yourself, you don’t know any better than to call Hermione that name!”

Harry was about to snap back at Damien but the teen was not finished talking yet.

“And then you constantly called mum and dad horrible names and I was still so stupid to ignore all of that. You know why? Because I thought that’s what brothers do. They forgive one another, stand up for each other. I thought that once you get used to everything, once you realise that you belong here with your family, you would change. I wanted to help you, Harry.”

“I never asked you to help me!” Harry hissed at him, unable to stop himself, as annoyance and anger surged through him.

“No, you never asked, but I thought that brothers don’t need to ask for help. They should just get it from one another. But I should have realised that you’re not capable of having such feelings! I should have realised that you’d stab me in the back. You know what, Harry? I’m through with this. It’s finished. I can’t put up with all this crap anymore! You don’t want to be my brother, that’s fine because I don’t want to be your family anymore! You’re on your own now.”

With that said, Damien turned and left a speechless Harry alone in the common room.

xxx

Harry had thought that Damien would sulk for a day or two and then he would go back to being his usual annoying self. But Harry found that Damien had stayed true to his word. It was now one whole week, since the disastrous Gryffindor vs. Slytherin game and Damien had ignored Harry ever since. At first, Harry had thought that it was a blessing in disguise. He had no one to bother him, no one to annoy him, no one to ask stupid questions. But Harry also found that he didn't have anyone to talk to, no one to sit with at mealtimes, no one to tell him useless gossip about the students of Hogwarts.

Harry didn't want to admit it, but he felt lonely without Damien. Harry hadn't realised how much company Damien had kept him. Whatever Harry felt though, Harry was stubborn about the fact that he would not approach Damien. Why should he? Damien was the one who had assumed that Harry was going to change, Harry never gave him any reason to think that, so it wasn't Harry's fault that Damien felt let down. Harry ignored the feeling of loneliness, it wasn't the first time that Harry had experienced the sharp stab of solitude. Instead Harry distracted his mind with the carry on at Hogwarts.

With the game lost, and with it all hopes of the Quidditch cup, the Gryffindors were in a lousy mood. The Slytherins, on the other hand, couldn't help showing off their victory. Whatever respect Draco had lost with the duelling club incident, was immediately restored by winning the match. Draco boasted his win at every opportunity, and did so mostly with the Gryffindors around.

The next match was Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff, and whoever won that match was going to play Slytherin in the next match. So there was no Quidditch practise for Harry, which he was thankful for. He couldn't be bothered with dealing with the Weasleys and Damien.

James seemed to be hanging around with Harry more these days as he knew that Damien was now giving Harry the cold shoulder. This was something that bothered Harry to no end. James watched as Harry tried futilely to ignore him and not let his presence bother him, but it was becoming increasingly apparent that Harry couldn't stand James. Finally James confronted him one evening.

“Harry, why are you so upset with me? I mean I can understand at the beginning you must have felt cheated into capture and everything, but it’s been nearly three months! Why do you show such dislike towards me?”

James had noticed that although Harry was in no way nicer to Lily, he tended to answer her questions with one worded answers and didn’t glare at her as much. Once or twice James even saw a glimmer of hurt in Harry’s eyes as he looked at Lily. It seemed that the majority of Harry’s anger was directed at James and he couldn’t understand why. What had he done?

Harry looked up from the book he was reading, and only glared at James.

“Harry, I asked you a question. The least you can do is give me an answer.” James continued.

It was then that James noticed something odd about Harry. The raven haired boy was sitting on his bed and James was sitting on Ron’s bed, talking to him. Harry had been sitting up on his bed reading and had not looked at James’ direction the whole time. But at this last statement from James, Harry tensed up. James could see Harry’s knuckles turn white, as he gripped the book with his hands. His emerald green eyes turned a shade darker and James could see that the boy had his teeth clenched. James was sure that Harry would give him an answer, now that James had made him mad. Sure enough Harry lowered his book and turned his fury filled eyes at James.

“Dislike you? I don’t dislike you Potter, I hate you! Just watching you sit there and talk to me as if nothing ever happened, makes my blood boil. If I had it my way, you wouldn’t even be sitting here, so don’t try my patience!”

James was speechless. Harry hated him! But why? What did Harry mean by ‘as if nothing ever happened’? Was Harry still mad at being caught by James? Surely not. But then what else could Harry have been referring to?

“Harry, I’m sorry, but you’ve completely lost me. What do you mean? Are you still mad at being caught by the Order? I already apologised about that. What else do you want from me?” James was caught off guard as Harry abruptly stood up and made his way over to the door, in a towering rage.

James quickly got up and raced to Harry, stopping him from leaving. James grabbed Harry by the arm but he instantly pulled his arm out of James’ grasp. James stood in front of Harry, blocking the door. This had to be resolved today.

“We are going to talk about this! I need to know why you have so much hatred towards me.”

Harry looked livid. James had never seen Harry this angry before.

“You are so pathetic, Potter! You actually want me to *tell* you why I hate you! You’re sick!” Harry spat at him and tried to reach for the door. James stopped him, now even more terrified at these strange turn of events.

“Harry! What are you talking about? Please just tell me why you are so mad at me?” James pleaded with the raven haired boy.

Harry looked at James and James’ heart skipped a beat as he saw tears glistening in Harry’s emerald eyes.

“Think Potter, can’t you think of any reason I would have to hate you? Try and remember.” Harry prompted quietly and James felt a horrible sensation, like the one you have if you miss a step while going down the stairs.

“Harry, please, you’re scaring me now. Try and remember what? Please just tell me because I don’t remember doing anything that would cause you to hate me.”

James had to be honest. He couldn’t think of a single thing that would constitute for this type of reaction from Harry. To James’ horror, tears actually came to the teen’s eyes, but never fell.

“Lucky for you.” Harry whispered while looking at James with a mixture of anger and hurt.

Harry moved a few steps away from James and turned around. He went back to his bed and sat down. He picked up his book and buried his face into it, acting as if the past conversation never happened.

James stood still. Completely freaked out by Harry’s behaviour. What the hell was going on? One minute Harry was in a towering rage, threatening James’ life, the next minute he was all upset, ready to walk out of the room, another minute later Harry was in tears and wanted some kind of confession from him and now he was sitting on his bed, reading, like nothing ever happened. James took a cautious step towards the teen.

“Harry? Do you want to explain what all that was about?” James asked quietly as he sat on the bed, facing Harry.

Harry however didn’t look at James and answered in a very controlled voice.

“Explain what? According to you, nothing ever happened, so there is no need to explain anything.”

James tried asking Harry what he was talking about for the next hour, but he didn’t get anything from the teen. After finally admitting defeat, James slowly made his way from Harry’s room, still trying to figure out what had happened.

As James left the room, Harry put down his book and lay down on his bed. At first, Harry had decided that it was best to leave dealing with Potter until he went back safely to his father. Harry didn’t want to risk getting caught. As much as Harry hated Potter, Harry didn’t want to get caught and never be able to go back to Lord Voldemort. But after today, Harry had come to a decision. He would deal with Potter before he went back home. James Potter was going to pay and it was Harry who was going to make him.

xxx

Chapter Twenty Four

The middle of November came and with it came the first Hogsmeade visit. Damien was still not on speaking terms with Harry. Ginny had tried to talk him out of being angry with Harry, but Damien had not paid her any heed. One thing had cheered up the Gryffindors, and that was the match between Slytherins and Ravenclaw. The Slytherins had lost the match by a terrible score, 230 to 20. The Ravenclaw team had played very well and blocked all but two goals of Slytherin. This meant that Gryffindor had come back into the running. The next match was between Hufflepuff and Gryffindor and if Gryffindor could get a high enough score then they might win the cup after all.

She explained that with the way things were just now, Gryffindor had to get at least 70 points more than Hufflepuff *before* catching the snitch. That was only 7 goals ahead. If they did then that would put Gryffindor into second place! Since Hufflepuff only got 20 points against their match with Ravenclaw, Angelina was confident that they would be able to win this match against them. Gryffindor were currently sitting in third place since Hufflepuff was at the bottom, next was Slytherin in second place and Ravenclaw was in first place by winning two matches. If Gryffindor won the match with Hufflepuff they would beat Slytherin in the number of points. Assuming that Slytherin didn't beat Hufflepuff by too many points in the next game, Gryffindor could have a chance at winning the cup. The last game would be between Gryffindor and Ravenclaw. If Gryffindor played that game well, then they could very well win the Quidditch cup for the first time in years.

Angelina kept encouraging Harry, saying that he was the best seeker she had seen and that she knew that Harry wouldn't let them down. Harry had to keep himself from strangling her. She was so annoying! Harry kept to himself at the training sessions and was glad that seekers didn't have much interaction with other players, since the only ones that would speak to him were the two girl players.

After a particularly awful practise, Harry met Professor McGonagall in the hallway. Harry had to admit that she was the only woman that Harry didn't want to get angry. Professor McGonagall looked down

disapprovingly at Harry and silently handed him an envelope. Harry took it and curiosity got the better of him. He opened it quickly to see what was in it. Inside the thick yellow envelope was a permission form to go to Hogsmeade that weekend. Harry stared back up at the head of Gryffindor house. Harry couldn't help the rage he felt at her, what was she playing at?

"Is this a joke?" he asked as he held up the form.

Professor McGonagall looked sternly at Harry before she spoke to him.

"I don't have such habits that I would joke with a student, Mr Potter. What you have there is a permission slip. Have it filled out and signed by either of your parent if you wish to come to Hogsmeade this weekend." with that said, the transfiguration professor turned and marched away, leaving a very confused Harry standing in the hallway.

Harry met James at the top of the stairs, leading to the common room. Harry stormed over to him and thrust the form into James' hand. James looked a little taken aback. He examined the wrinkled piece of paper and stared at Harry.

"What's this?" James asked a little confusedly.

"I thought you could explain that to me." Harry snapped back.

James looked at the form again and could just make out the words 'Hogsmeade' and 'Permission'.

"It's a permission slip to attend Hogsmeade this weekend." James responded.

Harry gave James an exasperated look.

"Yes, that much I had figured out myself. What I want to know is why I have been given this form?"

James looked at Harry again.

"Well, don't you want to go to Hogsmeade?" James asked uncertainly.

It was Harry's turn to look taken aback. He stared at James before speaking.

"You would actually let me go?" Harry asked.

"With certain rules and conditions in place, yes I would." James replied with a small smile on his face.

Harry was completely lost for words. They were actually going to let Harry go to Hogsmeade? But why? Were they not afraid of him escaping? Harry decided that this opportunity was not to be missed.

Harry looked at James, suspiciously.

"What kind of rules and conditions?" Harry asked, knowing that there must be some sort of catch in all this.

James looked uncomfortable but answered Harry.

"Well, it's actually another Auror who gets to decide the conditions but as long as you don't give anyone any trouble, I'm sure everything will be fine."

Harry looked curiously at James

"Who's the Auror?" Harry asked, already dreading the answer.

"Alastor Moody." answered James, not looking directly at Harry.

xxx

If Harry wasn't desperate to escape his prison, which was Hogwarts, Harry would never have let Moody come any where near him. However, going to Hogsmeade was going to be Harry's chance to escape. He knew that many Death Eaters were stationed in Hogsmeade and if Harry could get to them then Harry would be going back home.

James explained that Dumbledore had given permission for Harry to attend Hogsmeade but the Ministry had somehow been informed and they had insisted that with regards to security, Harry was to have an

Auror, other than a family member, to accompany him. That was why James and Sirius both couldn't take Harry to Hogsmeade. Moody had volunteered himself and the Ministry had approved of him.

What conditions were going to be set against Harry were not known to anyone other than Moody himself and he was not going to disclose that information until the day of the Hogsmeade visit.

Harry found that he was eagerly waiting for the weekend to come. He couldn't believe that after three months of capture, he was finally going home. When that morning came, Harry was called to the Headmaster's office. Harry was led to it by a very angry looking James. The only one regret that Harry had about going home so soon, was that he didn't get a chance to get back at James. Harry brushed that thought away, once he was back with his father, Harry would exact his revenge.

Harry walked into the Headmaster's office to find Moody and Sirius, waiting with the Headmaster. Harry tried to keep his face neutral, but a small scowl made its way across Harry's face nonetheless. He deeply hated all the men in this room.

"Welcome Harry, I trust you slept well?" Dumbledore tried to greet the raven haired boy.

Harry just glared at him and stood beside the fireplace, not wanting to be near anyone.

Moody was glaring at Harry and was grinding his teeth at Harry's rudeness. It was obvious to Moody that being here, at Hogwarts, for two months now, had made no difference to the boy in any way. Dumbledore continued talking.

"Now then, about this Hogsmeade visit. I trust you understand the concerns everyone has about you going along with the rest of your classmates. Nevertheless, I want you to experience the wonder of Hogsmeade, as it is something that everyone should enjoy, especially with your fellow classmates. Auror Moody will be with you at all times Harry. He won't be walking with you, as that would attract too much attention, but he will be trailing you, do you understand?" Dumbledore asked as his twinkling blue eyes locked with emerald green ones.

Harry looked at Dumbledore. They were actually going to let Harry wander around Hogsmeade, with only Moody trailing him. This was a golden opportunity so Harry decided, for once, to co operate.

"I guess so." Harry answered trying to sound bored.

"Excellent, excellent. Now, Alastor, I'll let you explain the conditions."

Harry noticed the bitterness in the word 'conditions' as Dumbledore said it. Harry looked back at James and saw him sharing a disgusted look with Sirius. Harry felt the feeling of dread building in the pit of his stomach.

Moody approached Harry and for a moment just looked at him, through his mismatched eyes. Harry glared back at him. Harry was not going to forget how Moody had treated him in a hurry. Once he was back with Lord Voldemort, Harry was going to make sure that Moody was the first one to meet a horrific death.

Moody acted so fast that Harry didn't even realise what had happened. Moody had reached into his robes and had pulled out his wand and something else. Before Harry had a proper look at what it was, Moody flicked his wand and Harry found something weighing down his left wrist. Harry looked at his hand and saw a thin red beam of light encircling his wrist. It looked like a bracelet. Harry looked at Moody, eyes wide with confusion. Moody gave him a twisted smile and explained.

"It's called a Bartra Bracelet. Ingenious thing really. It keeps the wearer within certain boundaries. I had to get it registered to the boundaries of Hogwarts and Hogsmeade. It means that while you're wearing this, you can only stay within these boundaries. If you try and go beyond them then..." Moody paused and pointed his wand at the bracelet around Harry's wrist.

Harry took a step back, trying to prepare himself for what was coming next. However, nothing had prepared Harry for the amount of pain he felt. As Moody muttered a spell Harry felt a sharp jolt of pain travel through his left arm and into his chest. Harry felt the constricting pain in his chest, where his heart was. Harry gasped at the sudden pain and grabbed his chest with his right hand. It was as if a surge of

electricity had passed through him. The pain quickly vanished but it still left Harry gasping for air. Harry looked at Moody with an incredulous look. He couldn't believe Moody had just done that to him. Harry looked over at James and saw him looking at Moody with a murderous glare. James turned his face over to Harry and gave him a deeply apologetic look. It was apparent that James didn't approve of this but had no say in the matter.

"...so you see, boy, its better for you not to even try, and escape because all you'll do is hurt yourself. If by some miracle you do get past the barriers of the Bartra then the pain will probably kill you as it will continue to crush your heart. Not very pleasant, but I have to warn you." Moody finished looking very pleased with himself.

Harry had never felt so much anger. He was shaking with rage as he looked at Moody. Harry took a step nearer to the Auror and hissed at him.

"If you think that I'm actually going to let you put this foul thing on me, then you're greatly mistaken. If this ridiculous thing is your condition for going to Hogsmeade, then I don't want to go. Take this off me!"

Harry had never felt so humiliated. This Bartra was keeping him restrained. Harry felt like an animal, being forced to remain within a certain boundary. He was not going to stand for it. It would be pointless in going to Hogsmeade now anyway, since he wouldn't be able to escape. What was the point in going?

Moody smiled even more broadly and leaned in closer to the extremely angry boy.

"I'm not taking it off. The Bartra stays on for the whole day, whether you go to Hogsmeade or not. I'm not risking you trying to escape while the majority of the school is gone to Hogsmeade. So it's your choice. You come with us to Hogsmeade or you stay here at Hogwarts, in any case, the Bartra stays on." At this point Moody leaned in closer to Harry and almost whispered to him. "And if it were up to me, boy. You would never take that thing off. You deserve to be kept like this."

That did it for Harry. He had been trying to stop himself from hurting Moody but that last statement made Harry lose all efforts in restraining himself.

Harry lashed out and slammed his hand into Moody's deformed nose. Harry heard the satisfying crunch of the bone snapping. He punched Moody again, this time in the gut and Moody kneeled over, gasping for breath. Harry grabbed Moody from the front of his robes and was about to deliver another fantastic blow to his twisted and scarred face when another jolt of pain travelled through Harry's arm to his heart again, making Harry let go of Moody and clutch at his chest. Harry struggled to breathe as he clutched at his heart. When the pain reduced Harry saw Moody pointing his wand at him. Moody had attacked him again. Harry straightened himself up and saw the worried faces of James, Sirius and Dumbledore.

"You try that again, and I won't be releasing you from that Bartra ever again!" barked Moody, while he tried to wipe away the blood that was dripping from his broken nose.

Harry didn't say anything, and instead raced out of the office. He felt sick. He rushed to the boys bathroom and was just in time, as he threw up whatever little food was in his stomach. Harry wiped the sweat of his forehead and sat on the floor, trying to steady his thumping heart. He ached all over from that stupid curse. He eyed the Bartra bracelet and tried to get it off his wrist. However, Harry had only managed to make the pain rush back at him as soon as he touched it. It seemed that the Bartra could only be removed by the person that had placed it on.

Harry cursed. He was stuck now. He had to wear this stupid thing for the whole day even if he didn't go to Hogsmeade. Harry decided that if he was going to be forced into wearing this thing then he may as well go to Hogsmeade. If nothing else he might be able to send a message to his father.

xxx

James was livid, he had only been informed of the Bartra Bracelet a few minutes before he was sent to collect Harry. James and Sirius and even Dumbledore had strongly disagreed to Harry wearing the

bracelet, but Moody had authority from the Ministry and there really wasn't much time to do anything about that. James and Sirius had argued that it was insulting and degrading for any person to wear that thing, unless there was a very, very good reason for it. James had argued that for Harry, it was not something that was necessary. James knew that Harry was going to fight against the decision and James didn't blame him for lashing out at Moody. Apparently, no one in the office objected to Harry hurting Moody, since nobody had moved to help him.

James couldn't help feel that he was betraying Harry. The way Harry had looked at James when Moody had explained about the Bartra was heart breaking. Harry didn't trust James, James knew that, but whatever small amount of feeling that Harry had about James, maybe protecting him, was now gone. James felt that all this just for a few hours in Hogsmeade wasn't worth it, but he had been told the same thing by Moody, that Harry had to wear the Bartra whether he went to Hogsmeade or not.

xxx

Hogsmeade was a village that nobody could dislike. It had something for everyone. Joke shops, sweet shops, Quidditch supplies, books stores whatever you could imagine. Harry walked down the busy street and took in his surroundings. He had only been in Hogsmeade twice before and both times didn't permit much time for shopping. He had flown over the village many times and had always wondered what it would be like to just calmly walk down the streets, enjoying window shopping or perhaps going into the famous Three Broomsticks for some drinks.

However, for Harry, today was not the day to be experiencing these simple joys. He was aware of the eyes that were glued to him and he could see Moody from the corner of his eye. The Bartra bracelet was weighing down on his hand, even though it looked like a faint wisp of red light. Harry hated wearing it and couldn't wait until the blasted day was over, so that he could get rid of it. James had joined Lily and was making their way over to the joke shop along with Sirius Black. Harry could see students from the third year to seventh year, making their way to the different shops. Harry soon saw the white blond head of

Draco and hurried over to him. Harry couldn't take much more of his helpless situation. He had been so convinced that he would have been able to escape today and now that he realised he wouldn't be able to, Harry was finding it immensely difficult not to break down.

Draco saw Harry and froze. Harry smirked as Draco opened his mouth to speak.

"If you ask 'what are you doing here?' one more time Draco, I swear, you won't be able to talk for weeks." Harry said while giving his friend a playful shove.

Draco quickly responded with a sneer on his face.

"My, my, aren't we in a snappy mood today. Look around Harry, you're in Hogsmeade. Cheer up, after all, there are many *familiar* faces around."

Harry smiled at Draco's obvious attempt at being subtle about the fact that there were Death Eaters in disguise in Hogsmeade.

Harry quickly started walking with Draco, while Crabbe and Goyle trailed behind, wearing stupid expressions on their faces.

"Well, I got to say, Harry. I didn't think that fool Headmaster would've let you come to Hogsmeade so easily. I mean have they forgotten who you really are? Or are they convinced that you have been tamed?"

Harry smiled sadly at Draco.

"If only." he muttered, more to himself than to Draco. Harry pulled up the sleeve to his hoodie and showed Draco the Bartra bracelet. He explained quietly what it was and what it would do to Harry if he were to try and escape from Hogsmeade.

The little colour that Draco Malfoy had, drained and then a red tinge appeared on his pointed face.

“Those...those bastards! How could they...that is just so...oh! You wait Harry...once aunty Bella gets a hold of them...they're all going wish they had never laid a finger on you!”

Harry smiled at his friends words. Yes, Bella probably would eat Dumbledore and the Order alive if she were to ever find out about what they had put Harry through. Harry didn't even want to think about what his father would do. 'Merlin!' thought Harry, 'I would probably get more than a nosebleed, when he finds out. I should probably give him some calming potion before I tell him.'

Harry felt his heart clench tightly as he thought about Bella and his father. He really wanted to see them again, he wanted to go home, however childish it sounded, Harry really just wanted this whole nightmare to end and to go home.

Harry and Draco talked about other things until they got to Three Broomsticks. Harry went inside to find the place packed full of people. There were many students there but the majority of the customers were adults. Some Harry recognised as Aurors belonging to the Ministry. Harry spotted the four heads of red hair sitting with a bushy brown head and a raven coloured head. Harry felt the stab of hurt again as he saw Damien sitting and laughing with the Weasley boys and girl and the 'mud-blood' Granger. Harry didn't know why it bothered him so much that Damien wasn't talking to him. Harry didn't need Damien, he was just a nuisance.

Harry turned away and walked with Draco and the two goons to a table on the other side of the pub. Harry sat down and the two goons hurried away to get some drinks. Draco was going on about how this pub was 'going downhill' and how its 'standards are slipping'. Harry only half listened. He was distracted by the way Damien was laughing and fooling around with Ron and the Weasley twins.

Harry never once thought about how Damien had sacrificed his friendship with the Weasleys, in order to spend time with him, but seeing Damien enjoying himself without Harry made him feel strangely hurt and annoyed.

“What is wrong with you?” a voice snapped at him. Harry swung his head around to see Draco staring at him as he had a bottle of Fire whiskey in front of him, obviously trying to offer it to Harry.

Harry took the bottle and muttered “nothing” to him.

‘What is wrong with me? Why does it bother me when I see Damien spending time with the Weasleys? Why should I care? He’s nothing to me, just like the Potters, he means nothing’ Harry tried to explain to himself.

Harry rubbed his eyes, he was starting to get a headache. Harry got up and made his way towards the bathroom. He was feeling a little sick again.

As Harry entered the bathroom he noticed that it was deserted. That was odd, since it was so busy outside. Harry shrugged it off and went to splash some water on his face. He needed to snap out of this, whatever this phase was, that was making him feel guilty over not speaking to Damien.

As Harry dried his face he looked at himself in the mirror. He had definitely lost some weight, since being captured. His eyes looked a little tired and he was paler than usual. His vivid green eyes looked even brighter against his pale skin. Harry tried once again, to smooth out his hair but the messy locks just wouldn’t agree with Harry. He sighed as he took in his appearance. He turned around to leave and nearly jumped back as he saw a figure standing at the door, blocking his way. Harry gripped his useless wand and glared at the hooded figure. There was something oddly familiar about the figure but Harry’s mind was too distracted to notice this right away.

“Whatever it is you want you can just forget it! Move out of my way before I blast you out of the way!” Harry snapped at the stranger.

The strange hooded figure moved closer to Harry and before Harry could do anything it reached up and lowered the hood covering the stranger’s face.

Harry let out a gasp. There in front of him, stood Bellatrix Lestrange.

Bella gave Harry a smile and took in the appearance of 'her boy' as he stood in his muggle attire, faded blue jeans and a black hoodie.

She approached Harry in three strides and only just managed not to envelope him in a hug. Harry hated hugs, she remembered that.

"Har-Dark Prince, it's good to see you again." Bella said in a very controlled voice. She was not going to show her emotions, not now anyway.

Harry stared back at his 'adoptive mum' and replied.

"You too, Bella."

Bella let out a small gasp. It had been so long since she heard her name being spoken by Harry. The Dark Prince had certainly changed. Bella could see the tired eyes, the pale complexion. He had not been eating and sleeping very well. Bella held in her frown at her observation and instead spoke to Harry in an emotionless voice.

"Come Prince, we should leave now, the sooner we go home the better."

Harry had never felt so helpless. He actually felt his heart ache at the thought of going home. Harry looked at Bella and took a deep breath. This was going to be hard.

"Bella...I...I can't." Harry started. The look of surprise on Bella's face lasted only for a second as it was instantly replaced with confusion.

"What do you mean by 'can't'? You have to come with me right now! I have a charm on this room, so that no one can come in. Every time someone comes to the door they suddenly remember something really important and they get distracted. You were the only one who could come in, but the spell is not going to last very long. Please, Harry you have to come right now." Bella could see the pain in Harry's eyes as he looked at her desperately. She had never seen Harry look so vulnerable. "Harry? What's wrong?" asked Bella, all thoughts of keeping emotions away from herself, forgotten.

In response Harry held up his left wrist and pulled back his sleeve. Bella stared at the red light twisted around Harry's wrist. She looked at it in puzzlement. Harry hoped she would recognise it so that he wouldn't have to explain how the foul thing worked. However, when Bella demanded to know what that thing was, Harry took a deep breath and explained the best he could. Bella was furious. She cried out when Harry described the painful feeling of the Bartra curse. She immediately withdrew her wand and before Harry could stop her, Bella pointed at the bracelet around Harry's wrist.

"REDUCTO" Bella hissed.

The curse hit the bracelet and Harry tried not to cry out, as the agonising pain shot up thorough his arm and into his chest again. Harry gripped his chest and focused on his breathing, as the pain faded away. He looked at Bella through watery eyes. The pain had been so intense this time, that it had brought tears of pain in Harry's eyes. Bella stood still as she realised that she had hurt Harry. She lowered her wand and observed how Harry's breathing was laboured and how he was shaking, probably because he had been through so much physical pain today.

She immediately fell to her knees and covered her face in her hands, what was she going to do now? She had thought that once Harry was in front of her, she would not leave until she took Harry with her. There was no way that bracelet could be removed by anyone other than Moody and how was she going to force him to remove the Bartra bracelet? The Auror was too experienced to be tricked under the Imperious curse and she couldn't attack him with so many Aurors around.

She looked sadly at Harry as he had knelt down next to her. She had never seen Harry look at her with so much emotion. Bella knew that Harry cared for her, even though he never showed it. Harry tried to comfort her.

"Its okay, Bella. I'm only going to be wearing this thing for today, once it's removed I'll be fine. And anyway, the wards can't be far from being worked out. The day the wards come down is the day I'll return

home. I promise.” Harry wasn’t only comforting Bella, he was trying to reassure himself as well.

Bella looked at Harry, tears of frustration running down her face.

“But Harry...how am I going to face the Dark Lord? How do I tell him that I failed his son? The Dark Lord is going to be so disappointed in me! I’m his number one! And I failed to bring you back to him.”

“No you haven’t, like I said. The wards will be down in a few weeks time, I’ll be home soon enough. Father wouldn’t want me harmed, no matter what the reason was. You will be the one to bring me back home. It’s just a matter of a few weeks.” Harry reassured her and both of them stood up and brushed their clothes.

“Oh and Bella, one more thing. I’m father’s number one, you should admit that by now.”

Bella laughed at the reminder of the topic that had caused many arguments between her and Harry.

“Harry, what in the name of the Dark Lord, are you wearing?” Bella asked as she dried her tears, very discreetly.

Harry laughed and Bella felt her heart skip a beat, she loved hearing Harry laugh.

“Trust me Bella, forcing me to wear muggle clothes, isn’t the worst they’ve done to me.” At the look of anger on Bella’s face again, Harry quickly added. “Not that they can do any real damage, they wouldn’t know what to do, the bumbling idiots.”

Bella was about to say something when she suddenly stood stock still. She looked at her wand that was still in her hand. It was glowing green and yellow. The alarm had gone off. The spell on the bathroom had now expired. Bella quickly put up her hood and looked at Harry.

Harry started washing his hands as the door opened and a few Hogwarts students walked in. They looked like fourth year students. Bella also pretended to wash her hands, the four boys went into the cubicles and Harry quickly whispered to Bella.

“Tell father that I will be home soon, and Bella, tell him that I have a little *situation* to take care of before I come back.”

Bella looked at Harry and was confused for a moment, before realisation came at her. She recognised the look of suppressed fury in Harry’s eyes.

“Harry, don’t you think you should focus on coming home? You can deal with him later. I don’t want you getting caught.” Worry was laced in Bella’s voice as she desperately tried to convince the raven haired boy to reconsider his plan.

Harry shook his head a little and hissed back at her.

“I’ve waited twelve years for this, Bella! At first I was prepared to wait until I got home, for fear of being caught, but I have everything worked out now. I will take care of things before I come home. Tell father that I’m sorry but I have to sort this out before I come home.”

Bella didn’t get a chance to argue. There were more people coming into the bathroom. She had to leave, now. She grudgingly said her goodbyes and left. She turned around to look at Harry one more time, before leaving him alone.

xxx

Harry returned to the table and ignored the suspicious look Draco threw at him. Harry looked over and saw that Damien and his little group had left the pub. Harry felt somewhat relaxed. He picked up the fire whiskey and took a good swig at it. He needed it after his talk with Bella. Even though Harry was depressed about being here, Harry had found that talking to Bella had cheered him up greatly. Now his father knew that Harry was okay and that he was not wasting time at Hogwarts. Harry was going to sort out a few problems before returning back to him. ‘That would surely cheer him up a bit’ thought Harry.

However Harry’s thoughts were interrupted when he heard frantic screaming and commotion outside. He whipped his head around to the window behind him and watched as the people of Hogsmeade ran around frantically. Harry couldn’t see what was bothering them.

'It can't be Death Eaters, can it?' Harry thought to himself. He locked his gaze with Draco as the two boys looked at each other. 'Maybe Lucius doesn't want to go back without me, he might be too afraid to face father.' Harry thought as he peered out of the foggy window. But Harry knew that Lucius had more brains than that. If Bella had told him about the Bartra Bracelet then he wouldn't try something like this.

The reason for all the chaos outside was soon revealed. Harry, and all the other people that were staring out of the window, saw the small army of black robed men appear. Harry knew instantly who they were.

"Shit!" Harry cursed.

Hogsmeade was surrounded by Daywalkers.

xxx

Harry watched with a sinking heart as the Daywalkers began attacking everyone. He heard the horrified gasps around him as they all watched one of the black robed men grab a woman and sink his teeth into her neck. Harry looked away as the woman's body began to convulse and she screamed out in agony.

Harry saw the people around him panicking. They were all obviously unaware of who these people were. Harry met Draco's gaze and saw the pale boy's lips mouth the word 'Daywalkers?'

Harry nodded his head to show that Draco was right. Draco's eyes widened and the look of fear deepened on his face. Draco had only heard of Daywalkers from his father and from Harry, he had never seen one. Harry had studied them but had never met one. He had no desire to meet one either.

Daywalkers were basically a new breed of vampires that could somehow walk in daylight. They were immune to sunlight and could easily walk in daylight without turning into a big pile of dust. They were more powerful than your average vampire which made fighting them very difficult.

Harry saw the Aurors running towards the Daywalkers, firing spells at them. Harry wished the stupid Aurors would actually use their brains,

once in a while. They had no idea what they were doing and were just firing spells at the Daywalkers, without thinking what spells were useful. Suddenly there was a very loud banging sound behind Harry and everyone in the pub stopped their panicking and looked around to the source of the noise. They saw the Auror Kingsley Shacklebolt standing on top of the bar, with his wand pointing at the ceiling.

“Will everyone, please remain calm! You are safe inside here. These are Vampires, they cannot enter without the owner’s permission!” Kingsley’s booming voice informed everyone. Harry watched as many people did calm down but were still trembling in fear. A white haired wizard spoke up.

“If they’re Vampires, how come they can walk around in the sunlight, they must be something else.”

Everyone else started voicing their agreement. Kingsley spoke louder so that everyone could hear him.

“They are a new breed of Vampires, although they can stand the sunlight, they still have all the other weaknesses of Vampires, so please remain inside and don’t panic.”

Harry knew that Kingsley was right but the Daywalkers weren’t stupid. If they couldn’t come inside to you, they would draw you out to them.

Sure enough, there was a loud crashing noise as the door to the Three Broomsticks was thrown open and a figure stood, menacingly at the door. His black robes were billowing behind him and he gave a twisted smile at the horrified occupants of the pub. His fangs glistened threateningly and Harry found himself looking away from him.

“What’s the matter, Rosmerta? Not going to invite me in for a little...Drink!” he teased while everyone in the pub shuddered and looked back at Madame Rosmerta, who stood shaking with fear.

She looked at the Daywalker, obviously confused as to how he knew her name. Harry wanted to point out that her name was written outside the pub but thought better of it.

Kingsley Shacklebolt and five other Aurors stood in front of the Daywalker. The five Aurors trained their wands on the intruder standing before them. Harry rolled his eyes, honestly, did they not know anything? The Daywalker smirked at Kingsley.

“Put that useless thing away foolish man, your magic can’t harm us.”

Harry watched as the Daywalker reached into his robes and pulled out a small triangular object. He held it up to that the Aurors could get a good look at it.

“My magic, however, can.” said the Daywalker, before throwing the triangular device into the pub. Harry had about two seconds notice. He recognised the device just before it made contact with the wall.

“GET DOWN!” Harry yelled and simultaneously pulled Draco down with one hand while flipping over the table to shield himself and Draco, with his other hand.

The triangular device slammed against the wall and at Harry’s shout, everyone threw themselves to the ground. As soon as the device hit the wall it exploded.

An unbelievable blast shook the pub and a huge eruption of fire came from the small device. Everyone covered their heads and Harry and Draco saw the flames lick over the edge of the table that was shielding them. Harry heard many pain filled screams and he knew that not everyone had been protected from the fire. Thick black smoke filled the pub and Harry could hardly see Draco, even though the blond headed Slytherin was right next to him. Harry heard many Aurors trying to put out the fire and help the victims. Harry knew that the fire was a magical one, since firstly, a normal muggle fire wouldn’t be able to do such damage. Secondly the device that he saw hitting the wall was one that Harry had himself used on many occasions. Harry tried not to think about the last place he had used it. He focused on getting out alive. Harry blindly grabbed the body next to him, he could tell it was Draco. He pulled Draco nearer to himself and shouted out the instructions to him. Harry and Draco got to their feet, but were still crouching low to keep safe from the flames that were licking the ceiling of the pub.

Harry led Draco out of the now destroyed pub. Harry was ready to defend himself against the Daywalker but found that the entire entrance was surrounded by Aurors. Most of the occupants of the pub had made their way outside. Harry saw two Aurors carrying out a man who was badly burned. Harry had to look away, he couldn't stand the sight of burnt skin. Harry closed his eyes and tried to calm down.

The sound of commotion and several screams forced Harry to open his eyes and look around. Harry saw no more than eight Daywalkers making their way towards them. Harry was already in a fighting stance, his body shielding Draco, after all the boy was his best friend. But before Harry got a chance to do anything, a huge group of people came in front of him. Harry saw James and Sirius standing directly in front of him and Draco. There were another eight Aurors, protecting the Hogwarts students and Hogsmeade residents. Harry watched as the Aurors started duelling with the Daywalkers.

Harry was distracted by Draco. Harry turned around to see the him pointing in the other direction. Harry followed Draco's finger and saw what he was pointing to. In the distance more Daywalkers were fighting with a group of people. Harry didn't understand what Draco was trying to say. But then the long blond hair caught Harry's eye and his emerald eyes opened with surprise. Lucius Malfoy and many other Death Eaters were fighting against the Daywalkers as well. Harry couldn't help but smile. For the first time, the Ministry, the Order and the Death Eaters were fighting on the same side, against something else.

"Well, there's something you don't see everyday." Harry joked with Draco. Draco gave a weak smile but looked nervously around him. Harry realised that Draco was shaking and didn't look too good right now.

"Draco, you alright?" Harry asked his friend.

Draco only nodded his blond head and continued to look as if he were fighting a fainting notion. Harry understood. Draco had never been in such a dangerous situation before. He had always talked

about becoming a Death Eater and being powerful but Draco had never been in such a life threatening situation. He was panicking.

“Come on, Draco. This is your big chance now. You always said that you wanted to come with me on one of my assignments. Just think that this is one right now. Fight now!”

Draco looked at Harry with a horrified look in his grey eyes.

“I...I can't.” he stuttered.

“Told you, you weren't cut out for this type of stuff.” Harry teased.

“No...it's...it's not that. It's...I don't have my wand!” Draco replied.

Harry gave Draco an incredulous look.

“What! Are you crazy Malfoy? We are in the midst of a war right now and you leave your wand behind in school? Have you completely lost it?” Harry scolded.

“Hey! Watch it. I didn't leave anything behind. None of the students are allowed to bring their wands with them, there was too much unauthorised duelling happening at Hogsmeade between students, so the teachers banned it. That pathetic squib, Flich makes sure that we don't bring our wands!” Draco told Harry, redeeming some of his Malfoy arrogance.

Harry was staring at Draco, unable to comprehend how stupid this rule was. ‘What? Do all of them live under a rock? Do they not realise how dangerous it was to go outside without your wand?’ he thought to himself.

Harry was baffled by their utter naïve-ness. Harry realised that Flich didn't check Harry, since he was being watched by Moody, so that's why Harry had his wand with him. ‘A lot of good that is.’ Harry thought bitterly to himself.

Harry saw Professor Snape and McGonagall running towards the students. Before he knew what was happening he was being ushered towards the school by the large mob of Hogwarts students. Professor

Chapter Twenty Five

Harry watched as Professor McGonagall whispered her findings to Professor Snape. The greasy haired Professor also swept the crowd with his black eyes, searching for the missing students. Harry knew what was going on in the Professors' minds. All the Aurors, including the Order, were already fighting a terrifying battle. There were students missing and no one available to rescue them.

The crowd of sobbing and trembling students were being ushered back inside Hogwarts. Harry was standing near the end of the crowd with Draco. There was a furious battle going on inside Harry's mind. He didn't want to get involved with Damien and the rest of the Gryffindors, Why should he care if they were missing? They were old enough, they had magical training as well. They could protect themselves. But Harry remembered what Draco had said, about the students not being allowed to bring their wands with them. Harry knew that even if Damien had his wand with him, there wouldn't be anything he could do to protect himself against the Daywalkers.

"Shit" Harry cursed, as he made up his mind. He couldn't let Damien get hurt. For some reason the mere thought of Damien against the Daywalkers was making Harry's stomach flip over with anxiety.

He turned and started making his way back to Hogsmeade when he felt someone grabbing his shoulder. He turned around to look at Draco's angry and worried face.

"Harry! Where the hell do you think you're going?" Draco shouted at him.

Harry calmly shrugged Draco's hand away and continued to walk away from the crowd. Draco followed him and grabbed his best friend again.

"Harry! Don't be stupid! You can't fight them, you know that. Leave the rescuing to the Aurors. Look out for your own neck."

Harry smiled as he shook his hand out of Draco's grasp.

“Don’t understand it myself Draco, but this is just something I have to do.”

Draco watched as Harry snuck his way through the crowd and disappeared into Hogsmeade.

‘I knew his saving people thing was going to get him killed one day!’ the blond haired Slytherin thought to himself. Draco turned and hurried towards Snape. Draco knew that Snape would help Harry, for one reason or another.

xxx

It was fairly easy for Harry to sneak back to Hogsmeade. There was still a fierce battle happening and it looked like the Daywalkers were winning. There were many bodies of fallen Aurors, scattered around. Harry kept to the shadows and sneaked back to The Three Broomsticks. Harry stood in front of the still burning and completely destroyed pub. Harry looked at the smashed windows and the black smoke engulfing the air around the small building. Many buildings were still burning, as with magical fire, it was impossible for it to be extinguished for several hours.

Harry pulled out his wand and hoped that it was capable of performing the spell he needed at this time. Harry held the wand in his hand and muttered “Point Me” as he brought an image of Damien in his mind. His wand started to spin around until it ended up pointing in the north east direction. Harry looked at the direction and set off quickly, trying to keep himself away from the battle.

As he rushed past a group of men fighting, Harry noticed two familiar faces. It was Moody and Sirius. They were duelling with three Daywalkers and still hadn’t figured out that spells were useless against these Daywalkers. Harry sighed at the sight. ‘Honestly, they don’t have a clue about how to even fight half breeds and they think they stand a chance at fighting against father!’

Harry rushed past them and continued, ducking and diving, to save himself from the spells being deflected around him. Harry saw the building that his wand was pointing at.

"You've got to be kidding me!" Harry muttered as he stood facing the broken down building. Harry was standing in front of the Shrieking Shack.

xxx

Hermione knew that #harrycoming here with Ron and Damien was a bad idea. So what if the Shrieking Shack was rumoured to be haunted? Who really cares? There were plenty of ghosts and ghouls around in Hogwarts if the boys wanted to see any. Why did they have to come here? But since Hermione and Ginny didn't want to wander around by themselves they had been talked into coming along with the two boys. Also, Damien said that according to his marauders map, there was a passageway from the Shack leading straight to Hogwarts grounds, so if anything happened, they would be able to run to Hogwarts, in a matter of minutes.

Fred and George had gone their separate ways as soon as they had left the Three Broomsticks. No one knew where the four of them were, and that thought unsettled Hermione.

"Can we go back now?" she whined as the four of them went deeper into the Shack.

"Hermione! If you say that one more time, I'm going to throw you out." Ron told her, but only jokingly.

Hermione scowled at him and continued to walk deeper inside the broken and unsteady building. A noise behind her made Hermione spin around.

"What was that?" she whispered.

"What?" Ginny asked.

"You didn't hear that?" Hermione asked the others. When all three shook their heads at her, she decided that maybe she was letting her imagination get to her. She followed quietly, but was straining her ears to pick up any noise at all.

"Is it still bleeding?" Damien asked Ron as he examined his hand, for the sixth time that day.

"Yeah, I can't believe that jar bit me!" Ron complained.

"Well Ron, when something says DO NOT TOUCH, you really shouldn't dip your entire hand in it." Ginny reprimanded him.

"Shut up, it's not even that sore, and it only bled a little bit." Ron shouted back, but his ears had turned a little pink.

That was another reason Hermione had tried to get everyone to go back, since Ron's little accident in the joke shop was causing his hand to bleed. But the Gryffindor had decided to show that he was brave and he wasn't going to need medical attention for a little cut.

This time there was definitely a loud banging noise and the four teens stopped in their tracks. It didn't sound like a ghost or a ghoul though. It sounded like heavy footsteps and there was more than one pair. The four teens just stood dumbly in the middle of the hallway, listening to the approaching footsteps. Finally Damien seemed to snap out of it and dragged the three teens into the nearest room. They crowded around the door and listened to the sound getting nearer.

"Is he still here?" a deep voice asked.

"Yes, I can still smell him, he is young. Find him quickly." another voice answered and the footsteps became louder.

Damien and the two girls looked at Ron. Was it possible these men were talking about Ron? They could smell him. Was that the smell of blood? That meant that these men were... 'Oh Merlin' thought Hermione. She mouthed the word 'Vampires' at the other three teens. All of them had terrified expressions on their faces.

Damien slowly crept away from the door and pulled out the map, they needed to get out of here, fast! He pulled open the map and whispered the password to activate the map,

"I solemnly swear that I am up to no good."

At once the parchment began to form lines, but before Damien got a chance to examine the map, the door flew open and the four teens were facing four, very fear-provoking men dressed in black robes and smiling in a very sickening way at them, their fangs glistening at them.

xxx

Harry crept into the old house. 'Why would Damien decide to come here of all places?' Harry thought to himself. He mentally made a note to give Damien a good thrashing. Maybe then he would use his brain once in a while.

Harry hurried along the house, still following his wand. The Shack was very old and very big. Harry had heard all the rumours regarding it but Harry couldn't be bothered with the fact that it may be haunted. When Harry got angry, he was more terrifying than most things. Harry made his way up the stairs and crept along the dark passageways. He hoped he wasn't too late. If Damien was killed, Harry didn't know what he would do.

xxx

"Who are you?" asked a very foolish Ron. He was obviously thinking that there was no way they could be Vampires as it was the middle of the day.

The red haired boy was in a situation where he felt he was the only one responsible for those around him. He was the eldest and Hermione was a girl, who was very capable of defending herself, but only when there was a wand in her hand. Ron knew that he was the one responsible for bringing the three teens here. He wanted to go to the Shack since all his brothers had boasted that they all had all been to the Shrieking Shack at some point, during their stay at Hogwarts. Ron had convinced the other three teens to join him and now they were in the middle of an abandoned building, surrounded by vicious looking men, with no-one to hear them scream.

The man standing at the front of the others looked at Ron. His piercing blue eyes travelled to Ron's bleeding hand and he ran his horrible tongue lightly over his lips. The sight caused a shudder to run down Ron's back.

“He is the one.” the man said, completely ignoring Ron’s question.

“He is the one we have been following, and look, he has got many others to accompany him too. How...thoughtful.”

At this the four men started laughing and the sound terrified the teens. Damien was rooted to the spot in fear. He couldn’t tear his eyes away from the face of the Vampire. The map held in his hand was long forgotten.

“What do you mean?” Ron asked again.

“I mean that the smell of your blood has brought us here to you, and you were thoughtful enough to have brought more, young, refreshing blood waiting for us.”

At Ron’s horrified look the Vampire continued talking and moved gracefully into the room.

“Yes, that’s right. I am a Vampire. We had come to Hogsmeade today in search for young blood as it is so much more satisfying than the adult blood we have to survive on. Especially young wizard or witch blood. But we were not able to get any, since those cowards rushed all our tasty treats back to that joke of a school you have. But then I sensed your blood when we were close to this building and I knew that I had to get to you. Now, after so long, we will get what is rightfully ours. You worthless humans are here only for our consumption.” The Vampire had now entered the room and the three behind him, had completely blocked the door.

Damien shared a look with Ginny as the extremely pale girl locked her brown eyes with Damien. Ginny pointed, discreetly to the ruined and almost collapsed wall behind her and Damien understood in an instant.

It was just in time as well, as at that moment the Vampire made a sudden leap at Ron. Ron, who was miraculously ready, jumped out of the way and at that moment Damien grabbed him as Ginny grabbed Hermione and the four teens flung themselves at the weakened wall. The impact of the four bodies slamming into the wall caused the wall to crumble and the four Gryffindors found themselves lying in the

rubble of the collapsed wall. There was no time for any of them to complain about their injuries, as they got to their feet and ran out of the room. The four Daywalkers, stunned at what had just happened, ran after them, knowing all the while that there was nowhere for them to run.

Damien, Ginny, Ron and Hermione ran desperately out of the room and down the stairs to go outside. However they saw at once, that the side of the building that they had come out onto had a collapsed wall. It was completely blocking their way. They had to go back the way they had come if they wanted to escape. Damien quickly glanced at the map, which was still in his hand. He saw the passageway leading to Hogwarts grounds was located near the top of the building.

Damien quickly showed Ron and Hermione the map and they took off towards it with all the speed they could manage. If Damien had looked closely at the map he would have seen the small dot labelled *Harry Potter* coming steadily towards them.

xxx

The four teens managed to get to the third floor where there was a portrait of a large tree with billowing branches and green leaves flying everywhere. This was the portrait that they had to open to reveal the passageway to get back to Hogwarts.

The problem was that Damien didn't know what the password was to open the portrait. He had never thought about that. As the four breathless teens stood in front of the portrait they looked at each other in horror. What the hell do they do now? They heard the four sets of footsteps coming towards them.

"Uh! Open up!...Uh, Open now! Open this instant!"

"Ron shut up! Have you ever seen anything that has an 'Open up' password?" Ginny screamed at him.

"Well that's the point isn't it? Maybe no one had thought about keeping the password 'open up' so it's worth a try!"

Damien didn't have the energy or the patience to scream Ron at this point. Just then the four Daywalkers turned the corner and almost lazily made their way towards the four Gryffindors.

The teens had no choice, they couldn't run downstairs as the way was now blocked by the approaching Vampires and they couldn't open the portrait so they only had one choice, to run towards the roof. Even as they all took off at an amazing speed, the four teens knew they were being foolish. Once they got to the roof, there would be no where left to escape to. But as their young minds had never had to deal with such a situation before they didn't know how else to handle this situation. Even though Hermione and Ginny had once before made the same mistake, they couldn't think clearly enough not to repeat the same mistake again.

As the door slammed open to the roof, the four teens stumbled through and ran to the edge of the roof. They looked down and realised that they were at least four storeys high.

"Maybe we should just jump. I mean it's not that much of a fall!" Ron said as he peered over the edge.

"Oh! Of course, that's what we should do! We won't kill ourselves, probably just break our necks! Or better still, we break our legs and wait for the Vampires to come and drink us dry!" Hermione snapped at him.

Ron looked on the verge of arguing with her when Damien finally stepped in.

"Guys really! At a time like this all you can think about is fighting!"

The two sixteen year old teens looked at each and flushed with embarrassment.

"What now?" Ron asked.

"Now you die." came a reply from behind them.

The four teens reluctantly turned around to look at the four Daywalkers standing in front of them. The four teens knew that this

was the end. They had no wands and nowhere left to run. They moved away to the other side of the roof so that they were as far away as possible from the Daywalkers.

“Bring the youngest one first, we will all enjoy him the most.” said the leader of the four.

Damien paled and tried not to lose the food he had eaten that morning. Ron and Hermione, and even Ginny, stood in front of Damien, shielding the youngest boy from the grasps of the Vampires. The Daywalkers laughed at their attempt to protect Damien.

Suddenly three Daywalkers came towards the group. One of them grabbed Ron and pulled him away from Damien. The other Vampire grabbed Hermione and Ginny and pulled them away as well. They all cried out in terror and tried to fight futilely to save themselves and Damien.

Damien kicked out with all the strength he had as the third Daywalker dragged him towards the leader. Damien was kicking and punching the Daywalker but his strength was nothing against a normal wizard, let alone a Daywalker.

The third Daywalker threw Damien at the feet of their leader. Damien quickly got to his feet and took a few steps away from the leader. His legs were shaking and he was sweating out of fear and exhaustion.

The leader of the Daywalkers smirked as he took in the nervous state of the boy standing before him.

“I’ll enjoy this, I can already tell.” he whispered, more to himself than to anyone else. Ron, Hermione and Ginny all struggled against their hold, but could do nothing except watch, as the Vampire made a leap towards Damien.

Damien cried out and covered his face with his arms as he saw the Vampire leap at him but just before Damien covered his face he saw a blur slamming into the side of the Vampire, causing him to be thrown away from Damien.

Damien and the other three teens, and Daywalkers, looked at the leader Daywalker. They all saw the enraged Daywalker sit up on all fours like a wounded animal, ready to attack. That was when all of them looked at what it was that had stopped the Vampire from ripping into Damien.

Harry sat on all fours, much like the Vampire and gave a very animalistic growl at the Daywalker in front of him. Damien couldn't believe his eyes. His breath hitched in his throat as he saw his older brother slowly rise to his feet and stand in a fighting posture. Harry had saved Damien from the Vampire, Harry was here to protect Damien. The thirteen year old stood still, frozen with shock and relief.

Harry had fury written all over his face and his emerald eyes were shining with rage. He stood, ready to lash out if the Daywalker made any moves. He had seen the other three Gryffindors being held by more Daywalkers but Harry didn't care about them. All he could think about was saving Damien, why he felt like this? Even Harry didn't know.

"Well, well, what do we have here? This just gets better and better." the leader Daywalker said as he stood up and took in Harry's appearance. To the Daywalker, Harry was nothing more than an extra meal.

Harry kept his emerald green eyes focused on the Daywalker. He knew how fast these animals could move. He was not going to look away from him. Harry also knew that the Daywalkers around him wouldn't do anything unless their leader instructed them. That was one of the differences between Daywalkers and normal Vampires.

The leader Daywalker moved slowly towards Harry and asked him in a threatening voice.

"I take it that you have a death wish. That is why you want me to kill you first, before the boy, Right?"

Harry laughed back, causing Damien and the other Gryffindors to look at him as if were crazy. 'What part of that was funny?' thought Damien.

“The only ones here with a death wish are the four of you!” Harry replied and Damien shuddered at the tone in which Harry was speaking. Damien had never heard Harry speak like that before. ‘This must be his warrior voice’ thought Damien. His dad, James, had told him that some people had different personalities when in combat. It was the only way people could differentiate between the many roles in their lives. This was called their ‘warrior personality’.

Harry watched as his words took effect and the leader Daywalker gave Harry a terrifying glare.

“Is that so? Well, we’ll have to put that to the test then.”

With that said the leader Daywalker suddenly darted towards Harry, his pale hands reaching out towards Harry’s throat. Harry was ready for this and in one fluid motion Harry stepped out of the way and slammed his fist into the Daywalker’s gut, causing the Daywalker to double over in agony. Although Vampires are termed as the living dead, they can still feel pain. A physical attack won’t cause them much damage but it will make them feel pain, so it slows them down in combat. At the sight of their leader in agony, the three Daywalkers let the teens go and made their way towards Harry. Ron, Hermione and Ginny quickly ran over to Damien and pulled him away from the middle of the roof. The four teens huddled together near the edge of the roof.

The leader Daywalker shouted out to his followers.

“No! Stay away. He is mine!” he stood to his full height and beckoned Harry to come forward. The other three Daywalkers stood still but were watching Harry closely.

Harry only smirked and beckoned towards the leader Daywalker.

“You want me, *you* come and get me!” Harry told the enraged Daywalker.

The leader Daywalker suddenly lunged himself at Harry and tried to punch him in the stomach. Harry caught the Daywalker’s hand and pulled it away from him before punching the Daywalker in the face. Harry pushed the Daywalker’s hand away and rammed his head in to

the Daywalker's face before slamming his foot in the Daywalker's stomach.

Damien and Ron were watching the fight with awed expressions while the two girls looked terrified.

Suddenly the leader Daywalker gave the signal and all four Daywalkers attacked Harry at once. Harry was ready. With amazing speed and accuracy Harry fought back. He grabbed the fist that came towards his face with one hand and leaned his weight against it, as he threw a kick at another approaching Daywalker, he then pulled at his hand so that the first Daywalker was pulled inadvertently in front of Harry just as the third Daywalker threw a punch at him. The Daywalker was hit in the face and he instantly collapsed onto the ground. Harry then ducked as the third Daywalker tried to hit Harry instead of one of his own men and Harry used his foot to trip up the third Daywalker before slamming his foot against the fallen Daywalkers's stomach. Harry got to his feet and dodged another fist before slamming his hand against the fourth Daywalker's nose.

Ron and Damien were close to cheering out loud as they watched Harry bring four powerful Daywalkers to the ground.

"Shouldn't we help him?" asked Ginny in a small voice.

"I don't think he needs any help." Ron replied while watching Harry deliver another fantastic kick

But even as they watched they could see the Vampires back on their feet again and attacking Harry. However good a fighter Harry was, he wouldn't be able to keep this up for much longer. Damien pulled out the map and tried to figure out what to do. They could run through Hogsmeade but that would take them ages to get back to Hogwarts and there was the possibility that they could run into more Vampires. Damien knew that their best chance was to try and figure out a way to open the passageway on the third floor.

Just as Damien put the map away, into his jean pocket, he caught Harry's eye.

“What the hell are you doing? Get out of here!” Harry yelled at the four teens.

However, Damien and the others couldn't pull themselves away from the fight that was happening in front of him.

Harry had now had enough. He had been longing for a good duel and beating these Daywalkers was more than satisfying. He decided that it was time to end this fight and go back to Hogwarts. Harry rolled out of the way as a Daywalker made another unsuccessful attempt at attacking him. Harry stood up and pulled out of his wand. The four Daywalkers eyed the wand and laughed at him.

“You foolish boy, your magic cannot harm us, we are more powerful than that!” one of the Daywalkers told him with pride.

Damien watched with a heavy heart. He knew, as did the other three Gryffindors, that Harry's wand was not capable of doing much at all. What was Harry thinking?

Harry however smiled back at the Daywalkers and replied.

“You call yourself powerful? You are nothing more than filthy half breeds that have been experimented with. You can't match the power of a wizard, no matter how many times you evolve.”

Before the Daywalkers could attack, Harry ran his hand over the wand and the black wooden, useless wand transformed into a long, gleaming silver sword.

Damien heard many gasps around him. Hermione was watching with her mouth hanging open in a very unladylike way. Ron and Ginny were opening and closing their mouths, unable to utter any compliment that was worthy of the magic they just witnessed. But the best reaction was from the four Daywalkers. Damien watched as they all took a step back in fear and looked at Harry, fully understanding that he was not a normal wizard child.

Harry smirked at their fearful reactions and held up the sword, letting the sunlight reflect off its shiny sharp edge. As the four teens watched, Harry swung the sword and aimed for the Daywalker nearest to him.

Harry only scratched the surface of the Daywalker's neck, but it was enough to get a reaction from them. The Daywalkers ran at Harry and pulled out their own weapons. Harry saw one pull out a whip like weapon while the others pulled out various items such as daggers and knives. The leader stepped up in front of Harry and pulled out a sword as well. He looked at Harry with hate evident in his face as he locked his blue eyes with Harry's emerald ones.

"You boy, are going to pay for that insult!" he spat at Harry.

Harry shrugged his shoulders and replied back calmly.

"I haven't even insulted you yet. But the truth can hurt. Don't worry though, my actions can hurt just as much as my words." with that said both Harry and the Daywalker made a leap at each other.

The two swords clashed together and Damien closed his eyes as he saw the Daywalker's sword slash at Harry. Harry stepped away and saw the small cut in his hoodie. Harry smiled back at the Daywalker. He had only cut the clothes. The blade hadn't even touched Harry's skin.

"Thanks, I hated this top anyway." Harry teased as he swung the sword and caused a huge cut on the Daywalker's arm. The Daywalker howled in pain and let go of his sword.

Instantly the three Daywalkers came towards Harry and started fighting. The Daywalker with the whip like weapon took the first strike and caught Harry around the wrist. Damien watched in horror as Harry doubled over with pain and with his sword still in his hand, Harry clutched at his chest.

"Oh Merlin! What's happening to him?" Ron asked in a terrified voice.

"I don't know!" Damien replied, equally terrified.

They saw Harry bring up the sword as another Daywalker tried to attack Harry with a knife. Harry shook the whip away from his wrist and stood up. Even at a distance, Damien could tell that Harry was breathing heavily and appeared to be in a lot of pain.

Harry cursed Moody under his breath. The whip had caught the Bartra bracelet and Harry had nearly screamed out in agonising pain. He stood back up after releasing himself from the whip and tried to steady his breathing.

Harry looked at the Daywalker holding the knife. Harry took aim and as soon as the Daywalker came at him, Harry swung around with the sword and dodged the knife easily before swinging the sword at the Daywalker's head. Ginny and Hermione both let out a scream as they saw the Vampire's head come clean off his body. For an instant the headless body stood still before turning to dust. The head that had hit the ground also turned to dust.

Harry didn't have time to see why the girls had screamed. He was too busy dealing with another attack. The Daywalker with the whip came back at Harry and this time caught Harry around the neck. Harry struggled, trying to free himself with one hand when the Daywalker mercilessly pulled on the whip, causing Harry to be pulled towards the Daywalker. Harry fell to his knees and felt the whip come away from his neck. Harry felt the searing pain as the whip connected with Harry's back. Harry hissed in pain and brought up his hands to protect himself. He had dropped the sword when he had fallen to the ground. Harry felt the whip come down onto his shoulder and he bit back another cry. Harry grabbed the whip at the third strike and pulled at it. The Daywalker came toppling over and Harry slammed his head into the Daywalker's face, causing the whip to fall from the Daywalker's grip. Harry struggled to his feet. Exhaustion was beginning to engulf him.

Harry swung the whip around the Daywalker's neck and pulled at a different angle, causing the whip to pull against the Daywalker's neck. In one fluid motion, Harry pulled the whip towards him and the whip cut through the Daywalker's neck. The head slid away from the neck and turned to dust before it hit the ground. Harry threw the whip to the ground and went to pick up his sword.

Before Harry could get to it though, he felt something slam against his head. Harry fell to his knees and grabbed his head. One of the Daywalkers used the handle of his dagger to hit Harry in the back of his head. Harry's vision blurred and he desperately tried to get to his

feet. However something had grabbed Harry's arm and had thrown him viciously to the ground, so that Harry was lying on his back. Harry blinked away the spots blinding him and saw the two remaining Daywalkers standing over him.

Before Harry could get up, one of the Daywalkers had pinned Harry down with his foot. Harry tried desperately to free himself, but the force of the foot on his chest had rendered Harry helpless. Harry brought up his hand and tried to wandlessly blast the Daywalkers away but the spell didn't seem to work on them. Harry realised that they must have developed some sort of immunity towards common spells. The leader Daywalker stooped over Harry and grabbed him by his hair. Harry winced but didn't let out any sounds of pain.

"Game over, boy!" hissed the Daywalker in Harry's ear before baring his fangs and ripping into Harry's shoulder.

Harry let out an agonising scream as he felt the Daywalker's fangs sink into his shoulder. Harry tried to free himself, but was unable to move as the other Daywalker was holding Harry in place with his foot, all the while laughing at him.

Harry never heard the scream that accompanied his own, as his younger brother dashed forward to help. Damien hadn't realised what had happened until it was too late. He saw the Vampire standing over Harry and was trying to get out of Ron and Hermione's grip, trying to tell them that Harry needed help now. The grip on Damien had loosened when they all heard Harry's piercing scream. Ginny and Damien both let out a cry and moved to help Harry along with the other two Gryffindors. None of them knew exactly how to help but found that they couldn't just stand back and watch Harry being killed.

Ron and Hermione grabbed at the Daywalker that was keeping Harry pinned to the ground. Damien flung himself at the Daywalker that was biting into Harry. Ron and Hermione managed to somehow pull the Daywalker away, thus freeing Harry. Damien and Ginny both started pounding their fists into the Daywalker's back and head, trying to get him to release Harry. Ginny picked up a rock that was lying near her and swung it hard at the Daywalker's head. The Daywalker let go of

Harry and howled at the pain. He grabbed Ginny and threw her across the roof. Ginny slammed against the ground and lay still.

Harry felt the fangs pull out of him and instantly put his hand over his wound. He looked down and saw the blood, staining the ground and his clothes. Harry sat up at once and was forced to stop moving by the wave of dizziness that washed over him. 'Must be the blood loss' his befuddled mind told him.

When Harry managed to observe his surroundings again he saw Ginny being thrown across the roof. Harry saw the Daywalker grab Damien around the neck and was pulling him off the ground. Damien tried to free himself but was unable to do anything except thrash around as his oxygen supply was being cut off.

Harry was instantly on his feet again. He ignored the throbbing pain in his head and shoulder as he picked up the sword again. The Daywalker was speaking to Damien in a low voice. Harry approached him from behind, but couldn't attack him. It was another one of Harry's battle rules. Never attack an opponent from behind, no matter how revolting they were.

"Let him go!" Harry yelled. The Daywalker let go of Damien with a smirk in Harry's direction. The thirteen year old fell to the ground gasping for air.

The Daywalker looked at Harry and continued to smile at him.

"You really are something special, aren't you? Anyone else would not have been able to get back up after such an attack. I think I will reconsider my decision to kill you. You will be a good addition to my...family." he smirked at Harry as the raven haired boy held up the sword.

"Sorry, but I already have two families fighting over me. I really don't need a third."

Harry swung his sword around and stabbed the Daywalker through the heart. The Daywalker stumbled back but remained standing. He looked at the sword sticking out of his chest. The Daywalker made no

attempt to pull the sword out of his chest. He looked at Harry with a bored expression on his face.

“Come now, I thought you knew better than that! Stabbing me through the heart with a sword isn’t going to kill me.” the Daywalker informed Harry.

Harry smiled back and replied.

“I know, but this might do the trick.”

Harry clicked his fingers and the sword changed back into Harry’s wooden wand. The Daywalker’s blue eyes widened as he realised what had happened. The sword that was piercing his heart was now replaced with a piece of wood, embedded in his heart. With a last look at Harry, the leader of the Daywalkers exploded into a cloud of dust.

Harry turned his attention towards the last Daywalker. He was standing near the edge of the roof with his hands around Ron’s neck. But he had been watching Harry and his leader fighting. He now realised that he was left alone. Harry cocked up his eyebrow at the lone Daywalker. The Daywalker instantly let go of Ron and turned his fearful eyes on Harry.

Harry had taken one step towards the remaining Daywalker, when the Vampire turned and jumped off the roof. Ron and Damien peered over the edge of the roof and saw the Vampire land very ungracefully on his feet. The Daywalker was already racing away by the time Harry came over and looked in his direction. Harry shrugged and turned around to face the four teenagers. Ginny had been woken up by Hermione and was now standing near Ron and Damien.

Harry looked at them a little uncomfortably.

“We should get going.” he said at last and without waiting for a response Harry headed towards the door.

Before Harry could reach the door though, Damien had thrown himself around Harry. The emerald eyed teen looked shocked at

Damien's reaction and tried to pull him away but the thirteen year old wouldn't let go of him.

"Oh Merlin, Harry! I'm so sorry for shouting at you. I shouldn't have said all those nasty things I said and I should have made up with you, when Ginny told me to, but I was just so mad at you. Harry, I'm so, so sorry! Please Harry don't be mad at me! Please!" Damien was nearly in tears as he said all this into Harry's chest.

Harry finally managed to pull Damien away and saw the small tears glistening in Damien's hazel eyes.

"I'm not mad at you." Harry almost whispered to Damien.

Damien looked at Harry and saw that he was telling the truth. Harry didn't know why he said that to Damien. It would have been more fun to say that he was mad at him and that he was never going to forgive him. But for some reason Harry found that he just wanted to be truthful with Damien, after all, the boy did help Harry when that foul creature had bitten him.

Harry gave Damien a weak smile and then turned to face the door.

"Harry, wait, your wand." Damien said as he picked up the dusty wand and handed it back to Harry. Harry took it and gave it a weird look.

"Never thought this thing could be so useful." he muttered causing Damien to smile at him.

Suddenly Damien's smile faltered as he took in the blood on Harry's clothes. His hazel eyes travelled up to the wound on Harry's shoulder.

"Harry! You're really hurt. We should go up to the castle quickly." Damien said as he examined the extent of Harry's injuries.

"Really? You think!" Harry said but he only half meant it. He had been trying to go back to the castle for the last five minutes now and it was Damien that was holding him back. Damien gave Harry an apologetic look and started to walk with him towards the door.

Damien had Harry's blood all over him. 'How did that happen?' Damien thought to himself. Then he remembered, when the Daywalker had let go of Damien, he had inadvertently dropped him in the pool of blood that had come from Harry's bite wound. The other three teens were still standing near the edge of the roof, wanting to give the two brothers some privacy to talk.

Suddenly the door slammed open and Moody came rushing inside followed by four Aurors. Moody took one look at the wand in Harry's hand, the blood on Damien's clothes and the severely injured looking three teens standing, huddled towards the edge of the roof and Moody jumped to the wrong conclusion.

Moody attacked without thinking and threw an 'expelleramus' spell at Harry, causing the wand to come flying out of Harry's hand and in the process, throwing Harry back violently to the ground. Harry hissed in pain as the burning welt on his back, caused by the whip, erupted with pain when he slammed onto the ground.

Before Damien could do anything he was grabbed by one of the Aurors and dragged to the other side of the roof. Three Aurors were running towards the confused looking teens at the edge of the roof. The Aurors grabbed the teens and pulled them over to where Damien was being restrained by an Auror. The four teens were completely confused by the Aurors reactions. Couldn't they see that Harry was the one that was severely injured? Why were they hurting him? Before any of the four teens could ask any questions they saw Moody approach Harry.

Harry tried to get back up but was violently kicked in the ribs and was forced to fall to the ground again. Damien cried out at this and struggled against the Auror holding him, who was running his wand over Damien, trying to see where the wound was that was causing so much blood loss.

"Stop it! Stop hurting him! He didn't do anything. Stop it!"

Damien's cries were joined in by the other three teens as they tried desperately to get away from the Aurors and tried to explain that Harry was innocent. The Aurors didn't pay any attention to their cries and continued to examine them for any serious injuries.

Damien saw Moody point his wand at Harry's left wrist and mutter a spell. At once Harry cried out in pain and clutched at his chest, exactly like he had when that whip had connected with Harry's wrist. Damien couldn't understand why Harry was reacting like that. What was Moody doing that was causing Harry so much pain? Damien tried to bite the hand that was holding him but the Auror just moved his hand away and gripped Damien's arms tightly.

The truth was that all of the Aurors, accompanying Moody right now, were of the same opinion about Harry as Moody was. They were frustrated about the fact that Harry had hurt plenty of people and had not been punished for that. The Aurors thought that the four teens must be afraid of Harry and didn't want to get into more trouble with him which is why they were trying to claim that he was innocent and that the Vampires had been the ones who attacked them. As if they could survive a Vampire attack! Other than Harry, no one else had a wand. Even the idea of the Dark Prince actually saving someone innocent was laughable. So they all ignored the desperate cries and pleas of the four anguished teens and let Moody teach that brat a little lesson.

Moody kicked the injured teen repeatedly in the ribs as he held the curse in place. Harry was finding it difficult to breathe as he tried to protect himself from the vicious attack. The pain in his chest was making Harry unable to think clearly, let alone do anything to protect himself. Moody finally lifted the curse and glared hatefully at Harry as he shouted at him.

"You think you can get away with hurting Hogwarts students, eh? I'll show you!"

Moody made to kick Harry again but Harry brought up his right hand and made a sweeping gesture with it. Moody flew back and slammed into the wall. He collapsed onto the ground.

Harry tried to get to his feet but the pain in his chest, shoulder and head was beginning to pull Harry into the realms of unconsciousness. Harry fell back onto the hard ground and tried to fight the unconsciousness that was slowly engulfing him. Suddenly Harry was flipped over so that he was on his stomach and Harry felt his arms

being grabbed and pulled harshly behind his back. Harry gasped at the pain that shot through his shoulder, due to the brutal force that was used to tie his arms behind him. Harry felt himself being dragged to his feet by his injured arm. Harry couldn't hold back his cries of pain anymore and cried out as Moody roughly hauled him to his feet.

Damien was now thrashing wildly in his captive's arms.

"Let him go! You're hurting him! Let Harry go, Stop it!" but his words were having no effect on the Auror.

"You're coming with me, boy!" Moody shouted at Harry before dragging him through the doors and down the stairs.

The four Aurors followed Moody, dragging the screaming teens with them. At the top of the stairs Harry began to regain some consciousness and tried to get out of Moody's grip. However the sudden movement from Harry made Moody let go of him unexpectedly, while they were in the middle of going down the steps. Moody and Harry, both lost their footing and Moody grabbed onto the banister to keep himself from falling. Since Harry had his hands tied behind him, he couldn't do anything to save himself and went tumbling down the concrete stairs. Harry felt his arm snap as it made impact with the hard stairs. Harry's injured body slammed against the ground after the last step. He couldn't move. He lay on the ground, gasping desperately, trying to fill his lungs with air again. Harry could feel the trickle of blood run down his temple and the side of his face. He opened his eyes and tried to get them to focus on what was happening. He could hear screaming and words being said, but he couldn't make sense of anything.

Ginny and Damien both had managed to get out of their captives grips, and had ran down the stairs screaming out Harry's name. Damien came and knelt down beside Harry, tears streaming down his face as he looked at his semi conscious brother.

"Harry! Harry! Are you okay? Oh my God! Are you okay?" Damien cried out as he pushed Harry's bangs away from his face. When he pulled his hand away, Damien saw it soaked with blood. Damien turned around to face Moody angrily, who was standing at the stairs looking down at Harry's motionless body.

Chapter Twenty Six

James sat next to Harry's sleeping form and watched Harry's chest rise and fall in rhythm with his breathing. James couldn't believe how badly injured Harry was. Madame Pomfrey had nearly ripped James' head off when she saw him rushing into the hospital wing with Harry's bloodied body in his arms. Harry had suffered a broken arm, bloodied wrists, a large bruise on the back of his head, and a very nasty bite on his shoulder. Not to mention the deep welts on his shoulder and back.

Damien, Ron, Hermione and Ginny had rushed through the explanations of what had happened. How they had gone into the Shrieking Shack, how they were attacked by Vampires, how Harry had found them and had risked his life to save them, how Harry had killed three Vampires and the fourth had ran away in fright. James listened to the recount of Harry's battle with the Vampires in awe. Harry had killed three Vampires! Hermione had told James about how Harry had wandlessly transfigured his wand into a sword and how he had used that to kill the Vampires. James was astounded. Harry really was very talented.

James felt a hand rest on his shoulder and looked up to see Lily. She handed him a cup of coffee and James took it gratefully. Lily sat down next to James and took Harry's hand, as she softly ran her thumb over his hand. She couldn't believe her son had been injured while he was under his parents care. What kind of parents were they? Both their sons could have died yesterday! She shook her head as she fought back the tears. Everything was okay now she told herself. Poppy had said that Harry was going to be fine. It was now the early hours of Sunday morning, but the two parents hadn't left Harry's side all night.

There was a gentle knock on the door and James and Lily looked around to see who was visiting the hospital wing, in the early hours of the day. The door opened and Professor Dumbledore came inside. James and Lily gave the Headmaster tired smiles. However their smiles vanished when they saw the second person that had entered the hospital wing. Alastor Moody came inside and stood awkwardly beside the Headmaster. James' hazel eyes flashed dangerously.

James had arrived at the Shrieking Shack and was in the process of running up the stairs when he saw Moody dragging a severely injured Harry down the stairs. Before James could reach them, he saw Moody and Harry lose their footing and James saw his son come crashing down the stairs. If that wasn't enough to enrage the father-of-two, James had seen the bonds holding Harry's arms behind him, rendering the poor boy defenceless. At this point James had lost his ability to stay calm and had crashed into Moody. All James wanted to do was to hurt the fellow Auror as much as he could.

James was still feeling this emotion and had to look away from the two men standing at the door, as the urge to rip out Moody's throat was becoming unbearable.

"James, Alastor has something he wishes to say." Dumbledore sounded like a teacher in a typical playground, making one student apologise to another after a fight.

James did a perfect imitation of his son, and ignored Dumbledore. Moody stepped forward and spoke to James, nonetheless.

"Look Potter, I'm...I'm really sorry. It was a misunderstanding. I came in and saw a wand in **his** hand and the blood on your young one and the other three children were huddled against the side of the roof and...and I just jumped to a conclusion. It was the wrong conclusion and I'm really sorry."

James still didn't turn around. He knew that for Moody to apologise was something really rare but James didn't particularly care right now. James had been told by Damien how he and the others had shouted and begged Moody to let Harry go. Damien told James that the Aurors and Moody didn't want to know that Harry was innocent. He told James how Moody had kept on hurting Harry, even though the four teens were shouting at Moody to stop. James had barely controlled himself at that point and if it hadn't been for Sirius and Lily, James would have killed Moody last night.

Lily looked over at Moody in disgust as well and turned her emerald eyes on the still sleeping form of Harry. When it became apparent that no one was going to speak, Dumbledore tried to make peace between the Aurors.

“James...” was all Dumbledore managed to say before James interrupted him.

“Dumbledore, please tell Moody to leave, because I don’t think I’ll be able to control the impulse to kill him any longer.”

James had said this in a quiet voice, but the threat wasn’t lost on Dumbledore. He looked sadly at Moody and told him that perhaps it was best if he did leave for the moment. Moody looked over at James and made to leave before a voice called over to him.

“Before you go...” Moody looked around to find Lily standing up “...I think you should remove that foul thing from my son’s arm” Lily’s eyes were shining with anger and she had her fists tightly clenched.

Moody remembered the Bartra bracelet and went over to Harry grudgingly. He stood as far away as possible from both Harry and James. He muttered the releasing spell and the red band of light circling Harry’s wrist came away and zoomed towards Moody’s outstretched hand. Moody pocketed the bracelet and left the room without uttering another word. Dumbledore left as well, not wanting to upset the distraught parents any further.

xxx

Harry opened his eyes and took a moment to let his blurry eyesight clear up. Harry looked around him and realised that he was, once again, in the Hogwarts hospital infirmary. Harry felt like his entire body was made of lead. He couldn’t move. Harry lifted his left arm, gingerly and the first thing he noticed was the absence of the Bartra bracelet. Harry let out a huge sigh of relief. Finally, that blasted thing was taken off him. But who took it off and why? Harry pulled himself into a sitting position. He looked around and found the hospital wing deserted. Harry could hardly speak. His throat felt raw. ‘Probably because of all the potions that Poppy threw down my throat while I was knocked out.’ thought Harry. He tried to see where the school nurse was but he couldn’t see anyone.

Just as Harry swung his legs over the side of the bed, the hospital wing door opened and James and Lily walked in carrying a small

plate of breakfast. The sight of Harry awake and trying to get out of bed, made both parents rush over to his side.

“Harry! Oh thank Merlin you’re awake! No, Harry, don’t get up! Lie back down, you’re not fully healed yet.” Lily said while trying to gently push Harry back into bed.

James rushed over and was speaking to Harry as well.

“You should really stay in bed. Poppy said that some of the wounds would take a while to heal. You don’t want to aggravate them. Lie back down.”

Harry however, shrugged Lily’s hands away from himself and continued to get out of bed. Both parents shared a frantic glance with each other before turning their concerned looks at Harry.

Harry tried not to wince at the pain in his shoulder and back, as he stood up. He moved away from Lily and James and looked around for his clothes as he was currently only wearing hospital clothes. He spotted a fresh pair of school robes, in the corner of the room. Harry made his way over to the clothes and picked them up. He was starting to feel a little dizzy. ‘Must be the blood loss’ Harry told himself. As Harry turned around to go to the bathroom, to get dressed, he found James and Lily blocking his way. Harry sighed. He really didn’t have the patience for this right now.

“What?” he asked irritably.

“Harry, you need to lie down. You shouldn’t be moving around right now, you could cause yourself more injury.” James told Harry, as the teen gave James a look that had disbelief written all over it.

“What? So all of a sudden you have my welfare at heart do you? You’re so pathetic!”

Harry tried to go around James but the Auror blocked Harry’s path.

“What do you mean by that? Of course I have your welfare at heart. Why shouldn’t I? Maybe you should think about what you’re saying Harry, I am your father, and it’s my job to care for you.”

The look on Harry's face was frightening. Harry was looking at James as if he were ready to rip out James' throat. His emerald eyes were devoid of any warmth, instead there was nothing but cold fury in them. Harry took a step towards James.

"Firstly, you are not my father. How many times do I need to say it? Secondly, you're the one who should think about what you're saying and to whom. 'Your job to care?' You have no right to say that, especially to me!" Harry's eyes flashed at James and he caught the look of hurt in them before Harry tore his eyes away.

"What are you talking about, Harry? You're making no sense! Why can't I care about you?" James was adamant that he was not going to let this matter go, like the last time. He was going to find out the reason for Harry's resentment towards him.

Harry gave James a funny look before walking around him and making his way towards the bathroom. Before James or Lily could say anything to him, Harry turned around and had a much calmer look on his face. He spoke to James in a much more controlled voice.

"How about this, Potter. In all the time I have been with my father, he has never let a single scratch come to me. I have been with you for less than three months, and I have ended up in Poppy's care more times than I care to remember. Maybe that's something **you** should think about."

With that said Harry went into the bathroom, slamming the door behind him.

xxx

When Harry came out of the bathroom he was annoyed to see the Potters waiting for him. Harry ignored their questions and tried to leave, but just then Madame Pomfrey entered the hospital wing and the look on her face was priceless.

James and Lily were shocked at the sudden change in Harry's mood. He looked at Poppy and his handsome face broke out into a sheepish smile, very similar to the sheepish smile that Damien gave when he

knew he was in trouble. Lily couldn't believe the similarities between her two sons.

"Harry! Explain yourself?" Poppy said, while standing with her arms on her hips and a very motherly stern on her face.

Lily felt a twinge of jealousy as she saw Harry react to Poppy. Harry's smile grew and he faked fear as he responded.

"It wasn't me! Honestly. I try and stay out of trouble, but the darn trouble always finds me!"

Harry laughed at the look of annoyance on Poppy's face.

"That's not what I'm talking about Harry. Now back into your hospital clothes and into bed." she ordered.

"Poppy" Harry sighed, but the school nurse was having none of it.

"Harry, please you have to rest in order to heal. I can't let you go until your wounds are completely healed." Poppy was talking to Harry as if James and Lily were not even in the room.

"I'm a fast healer, you know that, I'll be fine." Harry tried to go around Poppy but the school nurse was still blocking the way.

"Harry, that horrible bite wound still hasn't even closed up properly! It is too dangerous to let you leave just yet. At least stay until that wound heals."

She tried to take Harry's hand and gently pull him towards the bed. Harry pulled his hands away from her and gave Poppy a small smile.

"It won't heal, I mean not so fast anyway. It's a Daywalker bite. They can take up to weeks to heal and that's with magic."

James, Lily and Poppy were all staring dumbfounded at Harry. Weeks to heal! How was that possible? With magic, wounds would take the most three or four days to heal. It never took more than one week for any type of wound to completely heal. And how did Harry know this?

Before James could ask this question Lily beat him to it.

“How do you know that?” she asked in a voice that was barely louder than a whisper.

James observed how Harry looked at Lily, the scowl reappearing on his face, but he still answered her. If that was James who would have asked, he would have not gotten any reply.

“The fangs of a Daywalker have a unique poison, *Haketen*, it stops the wound from closing. If the treatment was non magical the victim would die in a matter of two maybe three days. With magical treatment, the effects of *Haketen* can be reduced but it takes much longer to heal than normal.” Harry answered.

Lily was looking close to tears again. Harry had been poisoned. He was going to be in pain for weeks. It was too much for her to bear.

Poppy looked at Harry and asked in a stern voice.

“You knew that, and you were just going to leave without informing me!” she shrieked at him.

Harry looked taken aback.

“I didn’t know that you never knew about *Haketen*. I just presumed that you would have the same knowledge as me.”

“How do you know this?” James asked and prayed that Harry would answer him.

Harry seemed to have noticed this as he merely glared at James before turning his attention back to Poppy. Poppy waited for Harry to answer but when she saw that Harry was making no effort in answering James, she prompted him.

“Harry?”

Harry sighed and looked at Poppy, completely ignoring James.

“I’ve been studying Daywalkers for the last year or so. They are a relatively new species of Vampires and are still in the process of being investigated but what we do know is that they are much more powerful than most Vampires. They can walk around in the daylight, have *haketen* in their fangs and are immune to most magic.”

James gasped. That’s why it was so difficult to fight them in Hogsmeade yesterday. The Aurors had only just managed to get rid of them.

Before anyone could say anymore the hospital doors opened and a very embarrassed looking Moody entered the wing.

Everyone in the hospital wing stared at Moody as he apprehensively came into the large room. Moody looked straight at Harry. The raven haired teen was trying to restrain himself from killing Moody with his bare hands.

“Potter, I just wanted to say...” Moody never got a chance to finish his apology to Harry.

Poppy strode towards Moody and slapped him in the face. If the situation hadn’t been so tense, James would have laughed at the sight. Moody was staring at the school nurse in shock. Poppy was looking at Moody with so much hate and disgust. She was holding her hand, as if physically stopping herself from hurting Moody again.

“If you ever hurt Harry or any of my students again, Auror Alastor Moody, then I swear on Merlin himself, you won’t even get the chance to *come* to a hospital.”

Poppy spat at the shocked Auror before turning around and marching towards Harry. She took the grinning boy and led him to his bed before pulling the curtains around them.

Moody took one look at the Potters before leaving the hospital wing. Moody made a mental note to avoid running into Madame Pomfrey for a few days.

James and Lily looked uncomfortably at each other as they were left standing alone in the hospital wing. They waited patiently for Poppy to complete her observation on Harry.

When she finally opened the curtains, Harry was standing beside her. Poppy gave Harry another pleading look but the raven haired boy just shook his head at her and walked away from her. Harry didn't spare a single glance at the two worried looking parents as he walked out of the hospital doors.

xxx

Damien was sitting uncomfortably in the Gryffindor common room. The story of the Vampire attack on the four Gryffindors had spread through the school like wildfire. Everyone had come to the four teens and asked for a thorough account of what had happened and how it happened. Ron loved re-telling the tale. He was the only one. Hermione and Ginny kept getting too upset about what had happened to Harry, so Ron had to finish off the story. The four teens had been instructed, by Dumbledore, not to tell anyone about Moody's unprovoked attack on Harry, as it would've been too difficult to explain.

Damien didn't want anyone to talk to him. He was too worried about Harry. His parents had told Damien to rest and not to worry but all Damien wanted, was to be with Harry. Damien had already tried to sneak up to the hospital wing, but was caught by his dad and was sent straight back to his dorm. Damien needed to see Harry, to ensure that he was okay. Harry had lost so much blood! Damien had never seen anyone so badly injured.

Damien sat quietly as a group of fourth year students were sitting with open mouths at Ron's tale. Damien wished they would all just go away.

"Is Harry okay?" asked one of the girls, listening to Ron.

That was the question that everyone asked, after Ron finished his story. At this question the four teens would get visibly worried. They kept on replying that they didn't know, since he was in the hospital wing, suffering from the bite wound. That was another thing that was

bothering Damien. What would happen to Harry now? Would he turn into a Vampire as well? He didn't ask Hermione, as he knew that she would no doubt know the answer, but Damien didn't want to know the answer. He was too afraid of what the answer might be.

"Damy, coming?" asked Hermione.

Damien looked up to find the common room empty except for the four Gryffindors. Everyone else had gone to breakfast and from the looks of things that's were the other three were headed as well.

Damien shook his head and replied.

"No thanks, you guys go ahead. I'm not hungry."

Hermione sat down next to the thirteen year old.

"Damy, don't worry. I'm sure Harry will be fine. We can all go visit him later on today. You really should have something to eat. You didn't have any dinner last night either. Please come and have some breakfast." Hermione tried to convince the depressed teen.

Damien shook his head again but gave Hermione a small smile.

"I'm really not hungry, honest. You guys go. I'm going to stay here for a bit. I'll see you guys' later, okay."

After giving up trying to convince the stubborn teen, the other three left to go get some breakfast. Damien remained seated in one of the comfy chairs near the fire. Damien was lost in his thoughts when the portrait door opened and Harry came into the common room. Harry hadn't seen any of the students and had figured that most had been at breakfast or were outside on this Sunday morning. Harry wasn't expecting anyone to be still in the common room and least of all it being Damien.

Harry stopped at the entrance and stared at the teenager in front of him. Damien was sitting with his head in his hands. Harry walked quietly towards Damien and was standing directly in front of him but Damien still didn't look up. Either the thirteen year old was ignoring everyone or he was so lost in his thoughts that he hadn't noticed

someone standing before him. It was obvious to Harry, that Damien was upset and was trying to stop himself from giving in to his emotions.

“Merlin, who died?” asked Harry, making the teen before him jump at his voice.

Damien looked at Harry and it took him a moment or two to react. Damien shot to his feet and was staring at Harry as if he were the world’s biggest miracle. Harry laughed at the stupid look on Damien’s face, but Damien didn’t seem to notice. He continued staring at Harry before realising that he hadn’t said anything to him.

“Harry! Oh Merlin, are you okay?” he stammered out, as seeing Harry standing before him, perfectly fine, was a miracle to Damien.

Harry shrugged and replied.

“I’m as fine as can be expected while I’m stuck in this place.”

Harry looked around him and noticed that Damien was sitting alone in the common room. That was a strange thing, since the boy had so many friends.

“Why were you sitting here alone?” Harry asked, before he could stop himself.

Damien shrugged as well and looked away.

“Everyone’s gone to breakfast and I...well I wasn’t hungry.” Damien told him.

Harry noticed Damien’s discomfort and asked him another question.

“Why were you not hungry?” He asked.

“I guess I was just worried...you know about ...you.” Damien seemed to get a little embarrassed at his revelation.

“Well you don’t need to. I’m fine and I don’t need anybody to worry about me. It would be better if you worried about yourself and not

went looking for trouble.” Harry still felt annoyed that Damien had gone to the Shrieking Shack.

Damien studied Harry’s face for a moment. He was still really pale and the exhaustion was evident in his green eyes. Damien knew that Harry wanted him to explain about yesterday, but Damien wanted to forget everything and just concentrate on repairing his relationship with Harry. The near death incident yesterday had showed Damien how trivial some matters were, like Quidditch and competition. It also showed Damien how much Harry really cared about him. Damien was truthful about the fact that he was angry with Harry’s betrayal of his trust more than the intentional sabotage of the Quidditch match, but after yesterday Damien didn’t need any more evidence that Harry cared about him.

Damien ignored Harry’s annoyed expression and just shrugged his shoulders in response to Harry’s harsh remark. Both Harry and Damien decided that they were hungry, so made their way to the Great Hall. As soon as Harry had entered the Great Hall, the Gryffindor table erupted in cheers. Harry was taken aback by the loud noise being echoed around the Hall. Soon the Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff tables started to join in the applause. Harry looked around him and was at a complete loss as to why everyone was cheering him. He looked at Damien with a questioning look.

“They all know what happened yesterday. I guess to all of them, you’re a hero.”

Harry felt his face grow red as the cheers grew louder. He looked over at Draco Malfoy and watched numbly as Draco gave Harry a discreet smile. The Slytherin table was the only one that wasn’t joining in with the applause. Harry wanted to turn around and leave. He felt his heart thump wildly as he heard some of the praise that came his way. Harry and Damien quickly made their way to the roaring Gryffindors table and Harry sat down. He was instantly bombarded with ‘Congrats’ and ‘Well done’ praises. Some of the girls that Harry recognised as the ones constantly looking at him and giggling were now looking at Harry with even more admiration.

'Great' thought Harry. 'Way to go Harry, they'll all definitely leave you alone now!' he thought to himself angrily.

After the hall settled down, Harry was approached by the head of his house, Professor McGonagall.

"Mr Potter, the Headmaster would like to see you after breakfast. Please make your way to his office."

Harry only nodded at her and watched her leave. He looked at the staff table in time to see Professor Dumbledore getting up from his chair. Harry went back to eating his toast and wondered what the Headmaster was going to say to him. It was the first time since coming to Hogwarts that the Headmaster asked Harry to meet with him.

'This should be fun.' Harry thought dryly to himself.

Harry tried to ignore Ron, Hermione and Ginny as they tried to talk to him. They tried asking how he was feeling but Harry just ignored them. He knew that he was going to have to explain to them, all of them that he didn't have any intentions of *saving* them. He only went looking for Damien. Harry decided that he would talk to them later. His mind was too occupied with why Dumbledore wanted to see him right now.

After breakfast, Harry left for the Headmaster's office. He came to the entrance and found that the stone gargoyle, leading to the Headmaster's office was already moved aside, permitting Harry entrance to the office. Harry didn't knock on the door instead he opened the door and walked in. Harry was starting to feel the shooting pains in his shoulder and wished that he had either stayed in the hospital wing or he had gone straight to his bed in his dorm.

Professor Dumbledore was sitting in his chair behind his desk, as usual. He welcomed Harry into his office and politely asked Harry to take a seat. Harry remained standing.

"Why have you called me here?" Harry asked impatiently.

“Harry, I wanted to thank you and apologise to you.” Professor Dumbledore replied.

When Harry didn't reply, Professor Dumbledore continued.

“You risked your own life to save the lives of four Hogwarts students. For this I must thank you from the bottom of my heart. I will be forever grateful to you. It pains me to no end that after doing such an act you were rewarded by Moody's repulsive behaviour. I must apologise greatly to you. I hope you accept my sincerest apologies.” Harry was so shocked by Dumbledore's words that he momentarily forgot to argue with him. He just stood staring wide eyed at the Headmaster. “Although I must say, you took quite a risk in going after those Vampires, or Daywalkers, as they like to call themselves. I would like to say to you Harry, please don't put yourself in such danger again. If it wasn't for Professor Snape, James and Sirius may not have found you so soon.”

At these words however Harry snapped back to reality.

“Professor Snape? What do you mean? What does he have to do with all of this?” Harry asked as curiosity got the better of him.

“Well it seems that your friend Mr Malfoy informed Professor Snape of your disappearance. Professor Snape managed to get to Hogsmeade and find your father and Godfather in time to tell them that you had gone looking for the missing students. How they managed to locate your whereabouts, I do not know.”

Harry was a bit annoyed at Draco. ‘Why can't he keep that mouth of his shut?’ Harry thought to himself. Suddenly Harry felt a familiar tug in his mind. He quickly looked away from Dumbledore and concentrated in bringing up his mind shields. Harry wished he'd paid more attention to Occulmency now. Harry heard Dumbledore chuckle softly. Harry's insides burned with rage.

“How long do you think you can keep this up, Harry? You will get tired. I'm only trying to help you. Please open up to me, let me help you.”

Harry stepped away from Dumbledore and only when Harry was sure that his mind shields were in place, did Harry make eye contact with

the Headmaster. Fierce emerald eyes locked with midnight blue ones and Harry had to mentally tell himself to calm down, as anger made the shields weaker.

“Help me! You want to help me? Is that why you let Moody put that foul bracelet on me? Is that why you let Moody do pretty much whatever he wants to me? You keep me here, against my will, humiliate me by giving me a tampered wand, force me to be with Potter everyday and then you try to force your way into my memories so that you can use them against me! Doesn’t sound like help to me *Headmaster*.” Harry finished sarcastically. “And just so that you don’t go around with crazy ideas, I want you to know that I didn’t intend on saving anybody. I only went to have a little fun with the Daywalkers. Being cooped up in this place for so long had me going crazy, so I wanted to vent off some anger. The idiot Gryffindors only happened to be there at the same time.”

Professor Dumbledore smiled at Harry’s obvious lie. Dumbledore didn’t have to read Harry’s mind to see that he was lying in order to keep up his act of the Dark Prince.

“Harry, you don’t have to lie to me. I know why you went there. It’s not something you should be embarrassed about. You did a good thing. You should be proud of your actions.” Professor Dumbledore was trying to get Harry to accept that what he did was not something to hide from. But to Harry, Dumbledore was only patronising him.

“Don’t you dare tell me what I should be proud of! What gives you the right to talk to me like that? I’m not one of your Hogwarts students Dumbledore!” Harry turned to leave the office. He couldn’t control his temper anymore and that was weakening his mind shields. He could actually feel them cracking. Just as Harry got to the door, Harry turned around to face Dumbledore.

“I’m thankful that I’m not one of your students. After all, look at what you’re doing to Longbottom. When he finds out that you made him share a room with his parent’s murderer, you will hopefully learn that meddling with other people’s lives can be detrimental.”

Without giving the Headmaster a chance to respond Harry left his office.

xxx

Lord Voldemort stood at the window, looking at the pouring rain through his blood red eyes. He was listening to Lucius Malfoy. Drinking in every word he was saying about Harry. Lucius had seen Harry at Hogsmeade. He told the Dark Lord that Severus Snape had sent word that Harry would be coming to Hogsmeade and that Bella had made arrangements to ensure Harry would be rescued. However the Bartra bracelet had ruined their plans and Harry was forced to go back to Hogwarts. Lucius didn't know how to keep out the part about the pain Harry felt when Bella tried to take the bracelet off. So he told Lord Voldemort that Harry had told Bella that he felt *uncomfortable* when the bracelet was tampered with. At these words Lord Voldemort turned around to face his loyal Death Eaters. Bella stood with her head bowed in shame.

"What do you mean by uncomfortable, Lucius?"

Lucius gulped and tried to steady his voice.

"My Lord, the Dark Prince said that he the bracelet would be taken away after the trip to Hogsmeade was over and that if he tried to leave while the bracelet was on him then he would...it would...My Lord..." Lucius bowed his head and tried to summon the courage that he needed to tell his master that, Bella and he had left his son in the hands of people that were inflicting physical pain to him.

Lord Voldemort watched as Lucius struggled to find the words he needed to say. Lord Voldemort almost lazily cursed Lucius. After holding the crucio curse for only twenty seconds, Lord Voldemort asked him,

"Did that loosen your tongue Malfoy?"

"Y-yes M-master" Lucius stammered out and tried to look at his master before continuing with his explanation.

"Master, the Bartra bracelet, it causes the Dark Prince...physical pain if he tries to go out with the barriers placed on the bracelet."

Lord Voldemort stood with his wand held tightly in his hand. He walked over slowly to the blond haired man standing, shaking with fear. Lord Voldemort stood before him and placed his wand directly at Lucius's heart.

"You left Harry with those who were hurting him?" Lord Voldemort asked with venom.

"My L-lord, there was nothing we could do. Bella tried to get the bracelet off, but...it wasn't possible."

At these words, Lord Voldemort turned to look at Bella. He approached her in three long strides and burned his red eyes into Bella. The dark haired woman was still standing with her head bowed, whispering her apologies to her master.

"Bella!" Lord Voldemort hissed and at once the dark haired woman fell to her knees.

"My Lord! I'm sorry...I'm sorry I failed you. I tried everything I could. Please, My Lord. Give me another chance, once the wards come down, My Lord I will bring Harry back. I promise My Lord!"

Lord Voldemort commanded the sobbing woman back on her feet. As soon as Bella was standing up again, Lord Voldemort grabbed a hold of Bella's face and pulled it sharply so that he could see into Bella's dark brown eyes. Lord Voldemort invaded Bella's mind and brought up the memory of meeting Harry in Hogsmeade.

As Lord Voldemort watched the meeting, he felt a pang on emotions as he looked at his son. The boy that Voldemort had raised, standing in the filthy muggle attire, looking exhausted and underfed. Lord Voldemort had so far managed to keep his temper in check. He was blocking all his emotions, trying to prevent them from hurting his only son. However, when Lord Voldemort saw Harry's reaction to Bella attacking the red, fiery looking band around Harry's wrist, Lord Voldemort lost the battle with his anger. As he saw Harry clutch at his chest, eyes watering at the obvious pain, Lord Voldemort let out a cry of anger. He wanted to pull away and not watch the rest but for some reason he watched Bella's entire encounter with Harry. All the while growing angrier.

Over a hundred miles away, a raven haired boy let out an agonising scream, while grabbing his forehead as it erupted in burning pain.

xxx

Harry had managed to get back to his dorm room, as the pain in his shoulder was beginning to throb very painfully. Harry had just gone into his room when all of a sudden the dull pain in his scar intensified. Harry grabbed at his scar and cried out. Harry always felt that his scar couldn't possibly hurt more than the last time, but this time it was unbearable. His head felt like it was surely going to split down the middle. The pain built up to such point that Harry felt physically sick. Harry blindly made his way over to his bed and grabbed the covers to pull himself up onto the bed. He had his eyes shut tightly and he was furiously trying to keep his screams in. He didn't want any of the students to hear him. Not only was it embarrassing but it would be very awkward to explain.

"Please, don't pass out, please don't." Harry told himself. He felt terrible the last time this happened he had collapsed. Harry had to learn how to deal with this. He couldn't afford to collapse again.

Just as Harry managed to climb onto his bed, the dorm room door opened and Damien walked in.

"Harry, are you in here? I wanted to..." Damien stopped talking as he saw Harry on his bed, clutching his forehead and moaning in agony.

Damien was at Harry's side immediately.

"Harry! Harry, what's wrong? Oh! It's your scar again isn't it? I'll go get help!"

Just as Damien made to go and get help, Harry grabbed onto Damien's arm.

"No!...Damien, don't...just...don't tell...anyone." Harry gasped as the pain intensified. Harry didn't want anyone to know, especially Poppy. The school nurse would keep Harry in the hospital wing forever.

Damien watched in horror as Harry bit his lip to keep the screams in. Damien realised why Harry was doing this. Damien took out his wand and cast the silencio charm on the dorm room after locking it.

Harry let out the screams that were building inside him. Damien wished there was something else he could do for Harry but he couldn't think about anything else that would help Harry just now.

After a few minutes, but what seemed like hours, the pain began to dull, until it was back to normal. Harry opened his bloodshot eyes and looked around him. He was glad he hadn't passed out. Otherwise Damien would have called Poppy and Harry would have to listen to her long lectures about taking care of his health.

Harry sat up and grabbed his head as it felt like it was going to fall off at any time.

"How are you?" Damien asked as he passed a glass of water to Harry.

Harry took it gratefully, his throat felt dry, from the screaming. Harry would've thought that showing pain in front of Damien would be embarrassing for him, but he was surprised that he didn't mind Damien being there. Actually, it felt kind of nice that Damien was helping him.

"I'm fine." Harry answered.

"Yeah, sure you are!" Damien said sarcastically.

Harry looked at Damien through his bloodshot eyes.

"You won't understand." Harry said softly.

"Then make me understand, Harry." Damien said, his tone considerably softer now. When Harry continued to look at his hands, Damien pushed further.

"Why do you have to put up with this? I know that everyone finds it weird that you consider You-Know-Who to be your father, but I don't..."

At this Harry looked up in surprise at Damien.

“You don’t?” Harry asked.

“No, what’s weird about it? He’s the one that brought you up, so naturally you’ll consider him as your father. What I find weird is how you can justify the pain he causes you?”

Harry looked away from Damien. Harry knew that talking to Damien was going to be pointless. He wouldn’t understand. No one could fully understand.

“He doesn’t mean it.” Harry said in a voice that was a near whisper.

“Doesn’t mean what?” Damien asked, hoping that Harry would open up and share something about his past.

“The pain, he doesn’t want to hurt me. It just kind of happens.”

Damien kept quiet and let Harry explain how and why the pain in his scar happens. Damien watched how Harry’s expression changed when he talked about You-Know-Who.

“You really care about him, don’t you?” Damien asked.

“Yeah I do, and I know what everyone thinks but they are wrong. Father cares about me too.” Harry said, wanting to stop Damien from arguing the point.

Damien smiled at Harry.

“That’s good, it’s cool you have a good relationship with him. At first I felt really bad that you grew up without dad, but it seems like you had one as well.”

Damien couldn’t believe he was saying this to Harry. The very idea of the most evil wizard, acting like a loving father, was suspicious as hell, but Damien had finally got Harry to open up. He didn’t want to make Harry angry by arguing with him. Besides, Damien figured that Harry wouldn’t have the need to lie. If Harry said that You-Know-Who had a good relationship with him, then Damien was going to believe him.

Damien noticed how Harry's expression darkened as soon as James was mentioned.

"Why do you hate him Harry? Dad really loves you. He really does care about you." Damien felt that it was important to make Harry understand this. Harry snorted and gave Damien a funny look.

"Yeah, sure he does." Harry said quietly.

"He does! When dad saw what Moody did to you, he completely lost it. He grabbed Moody and gave him a good thrashing! He told him that if he ever touched you again he would not even live to regret it, or something like that."

"No he didn't." Harry said quietly. Damien saw the look of sadness in Harry's face, before Harry hid it behind his usual mask of indifference.

"What do you mean? I was there, I heard him!" Damien exclaimed

"So did I" Harry said and this time he looked into Damien's eyes as he spoke. "He told Moody that if he ever touched his son again, then he wouldn't live to regret it. He didn't say anything about Moody hurting me."

Damien was lost for a moment. Harry wasn't making any sense.

"Harry, what are you talking about? Moody was coming towards you. He was going to pull me away so that he could grab you again, when dad grabbed him, he..." Damien trailed off. He understood what had happened.

Harry must have been conscious enough to hear his dad screaming at Moody. When his dad said that Moody was not to touch his 'son' again Harry assumed that he was referring to Damien as Moody was about to grab Damien when James had arrived.

Damien looked at Harry desperately.

"No Harry! You don't understand. Dad was not talking about me, he was talking about you! You have to believe me Harry, mum and dad both really love you! You have to believe me."

Chapter Twenty Seven

After his duel with the Daywalkers, Harry realised how popular he had become. Harry tried to keep himself away from the other students, but this was becoming more and more difficult. Harry was constantly bothered by many students, either praising him for his bravery, or annoying him to explain exactly how he duelled with four vampires. The girl students were the worst. They would give Harry such loving, admiring and attentive looks that Harry wished he could just make them all disappear.

Damien loved the attention Harry was getting. He was, once again, constantly by Harry's side. The only students that were less than happy about Harry getting so much attention were the Slytherins. Draco had to keep up pretences. If anyone realised that Harry and Draco were actually best friends it would cause too much hassle. Gryffindor and Slytherin were enemies from the beginning, it would not do well for anyone to find out the truth about Harry and Draco. The only students that knew about the bizarre friendship were Damien, Ron, Hermione and Ginny. They all knew better than to tell anyone else so the secret was safe with them.

One evening after dinner, Harry was making his way up to the dorm, with Damien, Ron, Hermione and Ginny. Harry was too busy talking to Damien and didn't see the group of Slytherins walking down the stairs. As Harry walked up the stairs, one of the Slytherin boys knocked against Harry on purpose. The skinny Slytherin's shoulder smashed into Harry's injured shoulder and Harry gasped at the pain that shot through him. Harry instantly brought up a hand to grab at his shoulder while the other hand shot out and grabbed the Slytherin boy around his throat. Damien, Ron, Hermione and Ginny had their wands out and were pointing at the group of Slytherins, who also had their wands resting on the Gryffindors.

Harry's eyes flashed at the boy in his grasp, before he recognised the skinny boy. His surname was Nott. Harry knew the boy's father, as he was one of Lord Voldemort's inner circle Death Eaters. This didn't do anything to calm Harry, as senior Nott was one Death Eater who Harry had many problems with. The skinny boy hadn't the chance to take out his wand and was therefore terrified that Harry would hurt

him. Harry only gave Nott a dirty glare before pushing the boy away from himself. He wasn't going to retaliate against the attack, it wasn't worth it.

Damien however was screaming abuse at the Slytherins.

"You bunch of low lives! Can't you even walk without causing trouble?"

"Sod off before I deduct points for intentionally disrupting peace!" Ron added.

The Slytherins were about to argue when they spotted James making his way over to them. They quickly walked away, all the while whispering threats to Harry and the rest of the Gryffindors. Harry couldn't care less about the threats. He would see to them later. Harry pulled his hand away from his aching shoulder and cursed when he saw the blood staining his fingers.

"Shit" he whispered when he noticed the dark stain covering his clothes. He tried to get away from the others quickly, before they noticed but he was too late. Ginny had already seen the blood and had rushed over to him.

"Merlin! Harry, are you okay?" she seemed to be lost for words as she looked at the blood staining his school robes.

"I'm fine." Harry replied and turned around to go back up to his dorm. He would fix up the wound by himself. However Damien had grabbed onto Harry's arm and turned him around to see the damage done.

"Harry! You need to see Madame Pomfrey. Come on!" Damien tried to pull Harry in the other direction, to go to the hospital wing, but Harry stopped him.

"I'm fine! Damien, let go. I'll be fine once I can get to my room." Harry shook himself away from Damien, wincing at the jolt of pain that this caused.

Just then James arrived and was puzzled at why everyone was looking so worried.

“Hey guys, what’s the matter?” he looked at Damien and then his eyes travelled up to Harry and rested on the blood covered robes.

“Harry! What happened?” James asked as he instantly came over to Harry’s side.

Harry shook his head at him and replied.

“Nothing”

“Doesn’t look like nothing, come on. We’re going to the hospital wing.”

James tried to take Harry’s arm and lead him up to the hospital wing, but Harry recoiled away from him at once.

“Leave me alone Potter, I don’t need your help!” Harry took off before anyone else could stop him.

James stood at the stairs, completely lost as to why Harry reacted like that. ‘Why does he hate me so much, that he can’t even stand me touching him?’ He looked sadly at the four teens standing beside him. The four teens walked away from James, reassuring the distraught parent that they would make sure Harry was alright.

Harry was in his room. He had removed his school robes and was currently sitting on his bed, surrounded by the supplies he needed to clean and dress the wound. It had only been four days since he was bitten and Harry cursed the Slytherin boy for attacking him. Harry had only managed to take off the old dressing, when his room door opened and Ron, Damien Ginny and Hermione walked in.

“Hey! I thought I locked that.” Harry said at once.

Harry saw Hermione and Ginny blush as they saw Harry sitting topless on the bed. Ron and Damien also were staring at him, but they were staring at the wound on his shoulder.

“You did, but we unlocked it with this.” Damien replied as he waved his wand in front of Harry.

Harry looked away from Damien and noticed that both girls were still staring at him. Harry smirked at the looks that Hermione and Ginny were giving Harry. They couldn't peel their eyes away from Harry's chest. Only when Ron noticed, and gently elbowed Hermione and gave a stern, brotherly sort of stare at Ginny, did the two girls look away.

"What do you want?" Harry asked as he continued with his task of redressing his wound.

"To help" Ron said while taking a seat in front of Harry. Harry gave Ron a weird look, as if even suggesting that Ron could help Harry, was laughable.

"I don't need help." Harry said as he pulled away the cotton cloth that was stopping the wound from bleeding. No matter how many times Harry had his wound looked at, it continued to bleed. Harry was actually starting to get a bit worried. The antidote that Lily had made for *Haketen* should have stopped the bleeding, but for some reason it was still bleeding as if it were a fresh bite.

Harry put another cotton cloth on his wound to try and sustain the bleeding. It had to calm down a bit before he tried dressing it. Harry didn't notice the look of concern and grimace that crossed the faces of the four teens standing in the room.

Harry pulled away the cloth and saw that it was completely soaked through with blood. 'This is so not good.' Harry thought to himself.

"Um Harry, don't you think you should go to the hospital wing? It really shouldn't still be doing that." Ginny said while eyeing the two blood soaked cloths.

Harry ignored her and put a third fresh cloth to his shoulder, wincing as he applied a little more pressure, to help force the bleeding to stop.

Hermione came towards Harry and tried to take a closer look at the wound.

"Have you tried 'Episkey' on it?" she asked quietly.

Harry opened his mouth to reply with a snide remark, but stopped when he realised that he hadn't even thought of using the simple healing spell. Harry didn't think it would work anyway. This was a Daywalker bite, it wasn't going to be healed by such a simple spell.

"No" Harry replied as he pulled the third cloth away and examined the wound.

Hermione took a breath and moved closer to Harry. She took out her wand and pointed it at him. At once Harry tensed away from Hermione.

"What are doing?" he asked Hermione with an unbelieving look at her wand.

"If you've not tried it, how do you know it won't work?" Hermione asked as she aimed her wand at the wound.

"Harry, you helped us, let us help you in return" Ron said to Harry as Hermione aimed the wand at Harry.

"I didn't help you! I couldn't have cared less if you all were hurt by the Daywalkers." Harry had wanted to tell them this ever since he woke up after the attack, but he never got a chance.

The four Gryffindors looked at each other, seemingly lost as to how they should respond to this revelation. Hermione was the first to speak.

"Whether you meant it or not, you did save us. It doesn't matter if it was directly or indirectly." Hermione said as she took aim and spoke softly.

"Episkey"

At once the wound stopped bleeding and a funny tingling sensation spread into Harry's shoulder. Harry looked at his shoulder and saw that the blood had indeed begun to coagulate. He looked at Hermione with a surprised expression. He had not even thought that such a simple spell would have helped him.

"I didn't know that would help." he said quietly.

"Sometimes it's the simplest of things that can help. You just have to be ready to accept it." Hermione responded softly.

Harry looked away from her and wished he could just be alone. It was easier when he had no one being friendly towards him. With all the attention Harry was getting and the Gryffindors being friendly towards him, Harry was finding it harder to distance himself. Damien was one thing; Harry made allowances for him, since Damien was the only one that didn't judge Harry. Damien was the only one who didn't try and change Harry, he accepted Harry as the Dark Prince and never asked him to explain his actions. But Harry didn't know why everyone else, who knew Harry's true identity, was being so nice to him. Harry couldn't deal with that. Especially Hermione, who Harry had a prejudice against from the very first day, was helping him. Harry knew that Hermione was an intelligent witch but he would never admit it out loud.

Harry didn't object to the rest of the Gryffindors helping him. Ron dressed the wound after Ginny cleaned it. Damien had told Harry in the passing that Ron wanted to be a healer, and from what Harry could see Ron would probably become quite a good healer. After Harry's wound was cleaned up and dressed, Harry sat back and watched the other four teens chat about the current happenings at Hogwarts.

Harry had never really paid much attention to Ron and Hermione before, but as he sat back and watched the two interact with each other, he could see how close they were.

Harry twirled his black and silver ring around his finger absentmindedly. Damien had noticed Harry do this a number of times. Damien found Harry's ring very interesting, it seemed almost...alive.

"Cool ring, Harry." Damien commented.

Harry looked at Damien at first in surprise, then looked at his ring, a bizarre look of affection, filled his emerald eyes.

"Yeah, it's cool. It's kept me sane at times." Harry said the last part to himself. Harry looked up and gave Damien a sad smile. Damien made a mental note to ask Harry about the ring afterwards.

"Um Harry, I wanted to ask you this before..." Damien gave an uncomfortable look at the other three Gryffindors, but carried on talking. "...um...since you were bitten...um...does that mean that you'll...that you'll, you know, turn into one of them?" Damien asked.

Harry just looked at him for a second before Harry, Ron and Hermione all burst into laughs. Ginny and Damien looked at each other, confused at why the three were laughing so heartily at Damien's question.

"Oh Damy! I can't believe you would think that." laughed Hermione while Ron tried to catch his breath. Harry also managed to stop laughing at his brother and turned to look at the other two, who had joined him in laughing at Damien.

"No Damien, I won't turn into a Daywalker, or a Vampire." Harry added as he saw the younger boy open his mouth to ask another question.

Damien closed his mouth again and couldn't help the smile of relief that came onto his face. Harry noticed and asked him,

"If I had, what difference would that have made to you?" Harry simply meant that he would not be living with Damien, so what difference would it make if Harry had turned into a Vampire or not. He didn't expect an answer from Damien

"It would make no difference to me, you would still be Harry."

Harry didn't quite know how to respond, so he settled for giving Damien a funny look. Harry knew Damien was lying, how could it not affect you? Harry's father had always told him that being a half breed was worse than being a mudblood. Half breeds were only to be used at the forefront of the war, and then disposed off. Harry mentally shuddered at the thought of becoming a half breed.

Harry caught Ginny's eyes a couple of times but he tried to ignore her as much as possible. Eventually, the two girls and Damien left for their respective dorms, leaving Ron alone with Harry.

"Let me know if you need the dressing changed at all." Ron said to Harry as he crept into his bed.

"Okay" Harry responded, not knowing what else to say.

As sleep came to the raven haired boy he wondered what he had got himself into.

xxx

The first of December arrived and with it came a notice about the Christmas Ball. Harry didn't pay any attention to the notice. Harry hoped that the wards would be worked out soon, so that he could return home. The ball was to take place on the 20th of December, one day before Hogwarts stopped for Christmas break.

Harry was having his breakfast one morning, surrounded by the usual crowd of Gryffindors, Damien, Ron, Hermione, Ginny and much to Harry's discomfort Neville, when the swishing of owls arriving broke the chatter in the hall. Harry didn't bother looking up, who would write to him? So when the first brown coloured owl landed in front of Harry, the raven haired boy thought that it was a mistake. Harry ignored the owl, thinking that the owl would find the rightful owner. There was a loud clatter as another brown coloured owl came and landed in front of Harry, knocking the jug of pumpkin juice over. Harry looked at the two owls in front of him and looked around the table. Harry saw a similar owl in front of Damien as well. Damien was looking at Harry with a curious look, but everyone else was too busy with their post, to notice anything.

Harry reached over and took the small roll of parchment from one of the owl's legs. He quickly opened the letter and saw that his name was in fact written, in very small, neat looking handwriting. Next to his name was the Hogwarts insignia. Harry was confused, the letter seemed to come from Hogwarts to Hogwarts. What was this all about? Before Harry got a chance to open the letter, four more brown coloured owls swooped towards Harry and landed very nosily in front

of the puzzled looking boy. Damien was looking at Harry and the small army of owls around him. Soon the surrounding Gryffindors noticed the odd number of owls around Harry as well and began sniggering and laughing. Soon there were another six owls fighting to deliver their letters to Harry. The emerald eyed boy was now looking positively confused. All the owls were brown coloured and as far as Harry could determine, the parchments attached had the Hogwarts insignia next to his name. Harry looked at Damien and saw the younger boy had tears in his eyes, caused by laughter. He and Ron were laughing heartily at the confused looking Harry.

“What?” Harry snapped at Damien.

“Well Harry, aren’t you popular.” Damien said before he and Ron dissolved into fits of laughter again. Hermione and Ginny were fighting their laughter as well. By this time the entire Gryffindor table was eyeing the many owls in front of Harry.

“What is this?” Harry asked as he tore the parchments away from the owls, so that they could fly away and not cause any further embarrassment to him.

“They’re invitations!” Damien said as he tried to control his laughter.

“Invitations? To what?” Harry asked

“The Christmas Ball! What else? Look, this is how things are done at Hogwarts. If you want ask someone out to the Christmas Ball but you don’t want to ask them in person, you send them a Hogwarts invitation. That’s why they have the Hogwarts crest on the parchments and they are delivered by the school owls. See?”

Damien pointed to many students that had similar owls sitting in front of them. Harry looked around and saw that many students had only one maybe two owls in front of them. Some had three, but Harry had at least twelve. Harry looked at the different parchments lying across the table. He picked one up and opened it. Sure enough inside there was a neatly written invitation, asking Harry to come to the Christmas ball with someone named Veronica Hann.

Harry looked at the many students looking at him. Some had smiles on their faces while many were giggling at his obvious embarrassment. Harry quickly tore the many parchments from the school owls and left them lying on the table. He had no intentions of opening them. He couldn't care less if the invitations were left in the Great Hall. Harry could feel his face heat up. He glared at Damien making the younger boy stop laughing instantly. Just as the twelve owls left another eight came zooming towards Harry. They all landed in front of him and began fighting to deliver their invitation first.

"Oh bloody hell!" Harry whispered as he tried to get away from the owls.

Damien and Ron reached over and began removing the parchments from the owls, so that this embarrassing nightmare was over for Harry. By this time the entire Great Hall was looking at Harry. Some of the boys were looking at Harry with awe and admiration, while others had clear looks of envy. Draco was thoroughly enjoying Harry's embarrassment. He knew that most girls in Hogwarts fancied Harry, but because of his cold exterior, which the girls stupidly misunderstood for shyness and mysteriousness, no one could ask him face to face. He had expected Harry to get a few owls, as he himself had received three invitations, but Harry had possibly broken the record for receiving so many owls.

Harry quickly got up and left the hall, he saw many girls with pink faces, giving Harry embarrassed, apologetic looks. Harry knew that these girls were probably the ones responsible for the invitations. Harry was quickly joined by Damien, who had collected the invitations and was in the process of putting them in his bag.

"What are you doing? Get rid of them!" Harry snapped at Damien.

Damien just laughed and responded.

"No way! This is going to be fun. If you don't want to know who all your admirers are then that's fine. But I want to see who all these girls are that are crazy enough to ask you out."

Harry only glared at Damien but let him put all the rolled up invitations into his bag. Harry knew that he was popular with the female students,

but he had never expected something like this. It didn't really matter anyway. Harry wasn't going to the Christmas ball. He hoped that he was not still at Hogwarts in three weeks time.

As if the invitations from the owls weren't embarrassing enough, Harry kept finding himself surrounded by girls that wanted to ask him out to the ball. Harry wasn't careful to be rude to them. He blatantly told them all to piss off and leave him alone, but for some reason, this just made the girls more interested in him. Harry heard one girl make a comment about Harry 'playing hard to get'. Harry ended up just running from the girls as much as possible.

It was just as a bunch of girls were leaving for dinner that Harry bumped into Neville Longbottom. The wizarding world's saviour was sitting by the lake, apparently waiting for Seamus. Harry had been so engrossed in avoiding the girls and he didn't see Neville sitting by the lake.

Harry nearly toppled over Neville and only just managed not to fall flat on his face.

"You alright?" Neville asked as Harry straightened himself out.

"Yeah, sorry, I didn't see you there." Harry spoke before he realised who he was speaking too.

"That's okay." Neville smiled at Harry's bewildered expression. Harry tried not to show his obvious discomfort but Neville picked up on it.

"Harry, are you okay? You look a bit...worried." Neville was not aware that he was the reason for Harry's awkwardness.

"It's just, I've had a long day." Harry responded as he tried to get away from Neville.

Harry had done a good job of ignoring the boy saviour so far. Apart from everything else, the boy was a spitting image of his mother. The same round face and twinkling eyes. Harry tried not to think about it and desperately wanted to leave. However, Neville had successfully managed to corner Harry.

“Harry, can I have a quick word?”

Harry cringed, why did Neville want to speak to him?

“Um, sure” Harry reluctantly sat down next to Neville, and mentally braced himself.

“I just wanted to see if everything was okay, you know between us.”

Harry looked at Neville in surprise.

“Why do you ask?” Harry responded.

“I don’t know, you just seem a bit, off with me. I know that you’re a bit reserved and everything but, I don’t know, I just get the feeling that you’re uncomfortable around me.”

‘Merlin’ thought Harry. ‘Does he really need every single person to be his friend?’

“Why would I be uncomfortable around you? I don’t even know you. I haven’t spoken to you for the simple reason that we don’t have anything in common.” Harry answered.

‘You and the rest of the Hogwarts population’ Harry added snidely to himself.

“I think you and I have a lot in common.” Neville said quietly and Harry found himself taken aback by the coldness in Neville’s tone.

“What?” Harry asked unable to keep the curiosity away from his voice.

“My parents, Harry” Neville said simply.

Harry felt like his entire body had gone cold. His heart thumped wildly in his chest. So Neville found out! It was only a matter of time, but Harry had sincerely wished that Neville hadn’t found out just yet.

“What do you mean?” Harry asked, keeping his voice as quiet as possible.

“We both lost our parents because of the one person. I mean you didn’t actually lose them, but you spent a good part of your life away from them.” Neville explained.

Harry let out a sigh of relief. Neville was referring to the lie that was told about Harry’s disappearance. Neville, and the rest of Hogwarts, had thought that Harry had been sent to live abroad by his parents, because of the threat of Lord Voldemort.

“Oh, yeah” Harry replied lamely.

“Both of our lives have been affected by Voldemort. He was the reason you were sent away from your parents, from your family. And he’s the reason that I lost my parents.” Neville stopped talking and looked momentarily embarrassed by his words.

Harry felt his blood run cold at Neville’s words. What would Neville say if Harry were to tell him that Lord Voldemort was not the one responsible for the absence of Neville’s parents from Neville’s life? That it was in fact Harry who had taken Neville’s parents away from him, forcing Neville to live with his grandmother.

Harry looked away from the round faced boy and tried to get his heart to stop beating so fast and become normal again.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to say it like that.” Neville apologised.

“No, don’t apologise.” Harry wished he could say more but didn’t think he would be able to comfort the boy for his loss, especially since Harry was responsible for it.

Harry saw Seamus come over to them and mentally thanked him for taking Neville’s attention away from himself. Harry quickly slipped away, cursing Dumbledore for his meddling and manipulation.

xxx

Angelina had the Gryffindor team trained up for the big game with Hufflepuff. Harry was finding the topic of Quidditch hard at first, since he didn’t really want to play. He told Damien that he intentionally sabotaged their first game, in the hopes that maybe Damien would

ask Harry to leave the Seeker position. However Damien replied that he already knew that Harry had let Slytherin win, since Malfoy could never have caught the snitch if he was racing against Harry. Damien told Harry that all quarrels regarding the Gryffindor vs. Slytherin match were long forgotten and that Harry should just concentrate on the upcoming match.

Harry had decided that he was going to play sincerely this time. He had wanted Slytherin to win when against Gryffindor, but now that the match was against Hufflepuff, Harry decided that he wanted to win the match. So Harry paid attention to all the coaching from Angelina, not that he needed it. All Harry had to do was to ensure that Gryffindor was at least 7 goals ahead from Hufflepuff, before catching the Golden snitch.

The day came of the match and even the freezing wind of December, did nothing to cool the tempers of the Gryffindor team. Everyone was so worked up that they kept on shouting and arguing with one another. The Weasley twins kept on waving their beaters bats at anyone who dared argue with them. In the end Harry had to smack them upside their heads to shut them up. Even the Weasley twins knew better than to retaliate against Harry's attack.

After everyone had calmed down, Angelina led them out onto the frozen grounds of the Quidditch field. Harry tried not to pay any attention to the cheers shouting out Harry's name. Instead Harry focused on the two teams standing facing each other. The Hufflepuff seeker was a sixth year boy called Paul Pedersen. He was a fair bit taller than Harry and definitely more bulky than Harry. Normally seekers were better if they were smaller and lighter, as it helped them to fly better and it was easier to turn their brooms around sharp corners. However in the current weather condition, Paul had a definite advantage, as he was less likely to be swept off course by the strong winds.

The whistle was blown and Harry shot off towards the sky. The game started off really badly for Gryffindor. Hufflepuff had scored two goals in the first half an hour, making the score 20-0 for Gryffindor. Harry had actually located the snitch twice in this time, but he remembered that Gryffindor needed to be seven goals ahead before he could

catch the snitch. The hardest part was to try and keep Paul away from the snitch. Harry kept on flying around the pitch, occasionally taking a burst of speed towards the other direction of the snitch, keeping Paul away from the snitch. Thankfully, the Gryffindor team decided to start playing, and within the hour the score had changed to 50-20 making Gryffindor in the lead. Harry started to watch the game, waiting to be seven goals ahead, so that he could catch the snitch. His eyes were following the golden snitch discreetly.

Finally the Gryffindor team hit the mark they wanted. They had managed to score nine goals and Ron had successfully saved the goals made by the Hufflepuff team, meaning that the score was now 90-20 to Gryffindor. This was it! Harry could now catch the snitch. They were seven goals ahead.

Harry zoomed off towards the snitch. They had been playing for nearly two hours in the horrible cold weather and Harry wanted the game to end now. Harry zoomed towards the snitch, Paul following him closely. Harry had no worries about the other seeker. There was no way the Hufflepuff seeker was going to compete with Harry.

Harry was zooming towards the snitch and it was almost in Harry's grasp when suddenly Harry's scar erupted in pain. Harry nearly collapsed off his broom and only just managed to stay upright. One of Harry's hands was grasping the handle of the broom, tightly, while the other hand was clutching at his scar.

'Not now, please not now.' Harry pleaded as he tried to bite back the pain.

The rest of the Gryffindor team had noticed Harry's unusual behaviour, but only two team members recognised what the problem was. Damien and Ron looked at each other in panic. What was going to happen now? Damien tried to get to Angelina, to ask her to call timeout. Damien knew that Harry was probably going to fall off his broom, if they didn't help him soon. But at that point Angelina had just got the quaffle and was zooming towards the hoops, to score another goal. Damien knew he shouldn't leave the playing field, in the midst of a game, but Damien didn't feel he had a choice.

Damien zoomed towards the Referee, Madame Hooch, who was on the ground, watching the game with her hawk like eyes. Damien flew speedily towards her and landed in front of the shocked Referee.

“Mr Potter! What do you think...?” Madame Hooch started, but was cut off by a frantic Damien.

“Madame Hooch! Madame Hooch, you...you’ve got to stop the game! Harry! Harry can’t play just now.” Damien knew he wasn’t making any sense, but he didn’t have time to explain what was wrong with Harry. He just wanted the game to be stopped. Madame Hooch looked utterly confused, she looked up at Harry and saw the Gryffindor seeker in obvious pain, clutching his forehead with one hand and trying to fly the broom with the other hand.

Before Madame Hooch could call timeout, she saw Harry zoom forward unexpectedly, it looked like Harry had just recovered from whatever it was that had stopped him playing. Madame Hooch had the whistle in one hand, ready to use it if Harry showed any sort of discomfort.

Harry felt like his head was surely going to split open. The pain was shooting through him, his eyes watering with the effort of keeping the pain away. For one fleeting moment the pain dulled and Harry opened his eyes just in time to see Paul zooming towards the golden ball. Harry zoomed towards him and willed himself to go faster. Harry couldn’t afford to lose, not now, when he was so close to winning.

Within seconds Harry was flying next to Paul. The Hufflepuff seeker looked at Harry and tried to go faster. The golden snitch was just in front of them flying at an incredible speed. Harry felt the pain build up in his scar once more. Harry bit his lip to stop himself from screaming, Harry could just make out, from his blurry vision, Paul’s arm reaching for the snitch. Harry had no other choice, he wasn’t going to lose to Hufflepuff. With his quick reflexes, Harry reached out and swiped the snitch from Paul’s outstretched fingers. This action made Harry lose his balance and he fell from his broom. Luckily, Harry was flying quite close to the ground and so didn’t have much of a fall. Harry slammed onto the hard ground and cried out in agony as his back erupted in pain. Harry clamped his hand onto his scar. It was as if a white hot

poker was placed on his forehead. The pain was burning with such ferocity that Harry had never felt before.

Harry barely heard the crowd erupt with cheers. Harry felt the golden ball in his hand, struggling to become free from his grasp, before his vision blurred and Harry felt himself plunge into darkness.

xxx

Harry opened his eyes and saw the white ceiling and cursed. How many times was he going to wake up in the hospital infirmary? Harry sat up in bed and found that he had woken up alone, again. Not that this bothered him. Harry had been alone most of his life. Harry sighed and got out of bed, wincing at the throbbing pain in his head. He hated these stupid headaches.

As soon as Harry stood up the door opened and Damien came in. He was still in his Quidditch robes and looked extremely pale. Harry smiled at the look of surprise on the younger boy's face.

"Harry? What are you doing? You shouldn't get up, you fell from quite a height. Get back in bed before Madame Pomfrey sees you."

Harry laughed at the look of terror on Damien's face as he said Poppy's name.

"What happened?" Harry asked as he sat back down on the bed.

"Well, you sort of collapsed." Damien said looking worriedly at Harry.

Harry rolled his eyes,

"Yeah, well I kind of figured that part out myself, I meant what happened afterwards. Did we win the match?" Harry asked, hoping that he didn't suffer in vain.

"Yeah we won." Damien said, and an insanely wide smile covered his face.

“The whole of Gryffindor is going crazy with joy! Gryffindor have actually got a chance at winning the cup now, the final score was 250-20. Angie scored just before you caught the snitch.”

Harry smiled at Damien’s excitement. Harry sincerely hoped that Damien won the Quidditch cup this year, but at the same time prayed even harder that he was not still here at Hogwarts for the final match.

Harry and Damien talked about the match until Poppy came in. After a thorough check up and much pleading from Harry and Damien, Poppy let Harry go back to the Gryffindor tower. As soon as Harry stepped into the common room, the entire room erupted in cheers and several people clapped Harry around the back as a gesture for well done. Harry looked around all the beaming faces, unsure of how to react. He didn’t like anyone touching him. He fought his way through the crowd and had just reached the stairs to go up to his dorm, when Ron put a hand on his shoulder. Harry turned around to look at Ron.

“You have a visitor.” Ron whispered to Harry. Harry frowned and looked around the common room.

“Not in here, he’s outside waiting for you.” Ron said and then turned away from him.

Harry made his way back through the crowd and went to the portrait door, to leave. He caught Damien’s eye and gestured that he’ll be right back, not wanting the younger boy to follow him outside. As soon as Harry had left the common room he sighed with relief. The amount of noise that the Gryffindors were making was causing Harry’s thumping headache to worsen.

“What’s the matter? Not enjoying the celebrations?” came a cold voice.

Harry looked around and saw the blond Slytherin standing to the side of the corridor. Harry quickly looked around, no one seemed to be around. Harry quickly walked over to Draco, a hard scowl on his face.

“I thought I made it clear Malfoy, not to come and meet me like this!” Harry hissed to him.

Draco only smiled at him and turned to step into the shadows. Harry quickly walked nearer so that if anyone was to come around the corner, they would only see Harry standing, seemingly alone.

“You’ll want to hear this Harry, trust me.” Draco said in a quiet voice, which was dripping with excitement.

“What is it?” Harry snapped. He didn’t want to get caught talking to Malfoy. It could ruin everything.

“It’s done, they’ve been worked out. It’s now a matter of three maybe four days to bring them down. You’ll be back by the end of the week.”

Harry stood still. The wards! They had finally been worked out. Now all Harry had to do was to wait for them to be weakened enough to allow Death Eaters onto Hogwarts grounds. After that Harry would finally be able to go back home. Harry felt his heart thump wildly in his chest. After nearly four months, Harry would see his father again. Harry stepped even nearer to Draco’s hidden form.

“Are you absolutely certain of this?” Harry asked in a near whisper. He couldn’t afford to make mistakes.

“Yes! I got the message from father. It was delivered straight to the common room. He will let me know exactly the day and time, so that you can be prepared.” Draco replied in an excited whisper.

Harry understood the cause of the pain in his scar now. ‘That must have been when father found out that the wards were worked out, he was happy when I first felt the pain. The second time must have been anger at the fact that it would still be three or four days before I could be rescued.’

Harry looked at the shadows hiding Draco.

“Thank you.” Harry whispered.

Draco seemed to be shocked at Harry’s words. Harry had never thanked him before.

“Y-you’re welcome.” Draco answered.

Chapter Twenty Eight

Harry had everything in place. He only needed two items for his plan to work and for that, Harry was going to need Damien's cloak.

"Damien, I have to ask you for something." Harry said to the thirteen year old, as he sat across the table for breakfast.

Damien looked at Harry with a curious glance.

"I need to borrow your cloak and map." Harry said quietly.

Damien tried not showing the shock he received at Harry's words. Damien would do anything Harry asked of him, but giving Harry the invisibility cloak and the map to Hogwarts was only asking for trouble.

"Oh Harry, I don't know." Damien started to say, as he gave a worried glance over at the staff table. His parents would kill Damien if they found out that he had given Harry such items.

"Damy, I'm not running away, if that's what you're thinking."

Damien was surprised to hear Harry call him by his nickname. It was the first time that Harry had called him 'Damy'.

"Alright, but one condition." Damien said. At Harry's curious look, Damien continued.

"I come with you." he stated firmly.

Harry's eyes widened with shock and he shook his head at Damien.

"No! No way."

There was no way that Harry was going to take Damien with him. Damien would definitely tell someone what Harry was up to and that would ruin everything. Damien crossed his arms over his chest and gave Harry a calculating look. Harry was forced to accept that Damien really did share a resemblance to himself.

"Fine! Then I'm not giving you anything. If you want the cloak and the map, then you're going to have to take me with you, wherever you're

going.” Damien was just as stubborn as Harry was and wasn’t going to back down, regardless of what Harry was going to say.

Harry observed Damien for a moment. If Harry was to take Damien with him, would it be so bad? Damien probably wouldn’t even know what Harry was up to, and by the time he figured anything out, it would be too late to do anything.

“Fine, but you have to swear that you won’t breathe a word to anyone. Okay?” Harry asked.

“I swear! So what are we going to do?” asked the excited teen.

“We’re going to be borrowing a few things from the potions supply.” Harry answered.

xxx

It was late at night and Harry still couldn’t believe that he was taking Damien with him to the dungeons. Harry and Damien managed to hide under the invisibility cloak, which Damien managed to successfully ‘borrow’ from his dad again. Harry had the map in front of him as he and Damien crept along the darkened walls of the dungeon. Damien had no idea what potion it was that Harry wanted.

Harry crept into the potions classroom and the two boys took off the cloak. Harry walked over to the potions cupboard and after checking it over, for any spells that may alert anyone of the unauthorised use of the potions, Harry opened the door quietly.

Harry had told Damien to stay near the door, with the map, in case someone was to come along. Damien watched as Harry rummaged through the supply cupboard. Harry seemed to be looking for a particular potion, as he wasn’t taking out any ingredients but actually looking for a pre made potion. Damien wondered what Harry was up to. At last Harry gave a victorious grin and held up a small bottle. It was made out of purple coloured glass. Harry quickly slipped it in his robes and closed the door over. He walked up to Damien and slipped the cloak over himself and his brother. Damien waited until they were back safely in their common room before asking Harry about the potion.

“So what potion were you after?”

Harry looked at Damien and smiled at him.

“That’s not your concern.” Harry said and without another word Harry crept towards the stairs. Before he went into his dorm though, Harry turned to look at Damien.

“You won’t tell anyone about this right?” Harry asked the hazel eyed boy.

Damien shook his head and Harry smiled at him before disappearing into his room.

The next day Damien had Potions class. Damien couldn’t wait until his mum had finished giving out the instructions, so that he could rush over to the store cupboard and try and figure out what potion Harry had taken last night. As Damien hurried over to collect the various ingredients, he let his eyes wander to the section with the pre made ingredients. Damien saw that the section of the cupboard holding the potions had been locked and was impossible to open without a wand. Harry had used Damien’s wand last night to open that cupboard section and take the purple coloured bottle.

Just as Damien was about to leave he saw another purple coloured bottle sitting just beside the edge of the steel bars. Damien had to hold back his gasp of surprise as he read the label on the purple bottle. ‘Whatever in the world did Harry plan on doing with Polyjuice Potion?’ he thought.

xxx

“Well, you got any good news yet?” Harry asked the blond haired boy, as he pretended to rummage through a few books in the library, Draco standing next to him, but facing the other way.

“What do you think? Of course I have good news. It’s done! They will be coming tomorrow night. You have to make sure that you are on the grounds by 8pm, okay?”

Harry couldn't help smile. He was going to go home tomorrow. He would finally get to leave Hogwarts and go back to Lord Voldemort. Harry walked away from Draco, after confirming with him that he would be ready for 8pm tomorrow night. As Harry crept into bed that night he couldn't help thinking that this was his last night at Hogwarts, and if everything went according to plan, it was the same for James Potter.

xxx

Damien had wanted to talk to Harry, regarding the Polyjuice Potion, but he couldn't find him anywhere. Damien decided that he would talk to Harry at breakfast.

However, once Damien got to the Gryffindor table he couldn't see Harry anywhere.

"Ron, have you seen Harry?" Damien asked, starting to feel panicky.

"Yeah, he was still asleep in his bed the last time I saw him." Ron replied as he shovelled some cereal into his mouth.

"Oh!" Damien replied and willed himself to calm down. What was wrong with him today? Damien just couldn't shake off the feeling that something really bad was going to happen today.

Damien never got the chance to talk to Harry until after his first two morning classes. Just before Damien went to his Charms class, he ran up to see Harry. He had bumped into Hermione and she had said that Harry hadn't turned up for class, so Damien was going to the boys dorm to see if Harry was still there.

As Damien opened the door to Harry's dorm, a peculiar sight greeted him. Harry was lying in his bed, looking a bit pale. He seemed to be sleeping but that wasn't the strange thing. The strange thing was that Sirius was standing next to the sleeping form of Harry, holding Harry's black and silver ring in his hand. Sirius seemed to be studying the ring. For some reason this sight startled Damien. He knew that Harry was a bit possessive about his ring and Damien didn't like the fact that his uncle Siri was snooping around in Harry's things.

“Uncle Siri?” Damien whispered quietly as not to wake up Harry.

Sirius looked up at Damien and for a moment looked taken aback, as if he were caught in the middle of an offence. When he saw that it was Damien at the door he visibly relaxed and greeted him.

“Hey pup! What are you doing here? Don’t you have classes?”

Damien looked at his uncle in surprise. Sirius never told Damien off for not going to class, in fact it was the other way around. His uncle always told him that it was pointless to attend every lecture and that there could be many things he could be doing with his precious time.

“I do. I was on my way to Charms class but I wanted to see if Harry was okay. I’ve not seen him all day.” Damien answered as he took in Harry’s awful appearance.

“He has a fever. I came in to see where he was and when I came into his room he was being sick. Poppy’s just been to see him. She gave him some Dreamless Sleep potion so he’ll be asleep for a while.” Sirius told him a quiet voice.

Damien nodded his head and then looked at the black ring, still in Sirius’ hand.

“What are you doing with that?” Damien asked.

“Just looking at it.” Sirius replied as he twirled the ring in his fingers.

For some reason Damien got really annoyed at this.

“Well, stop it! It belongs to Harry, so I think you should just leave it alone.” Damien couldn’t understand the frustration he felt at seeing someone else take Harry’s belongings without asking him.

“Alright, calm down. I was only looking.” Sirius placed the ring on Harry’s bedside table and gave Damien a funny look. “You alright, pup” Sirius asked.

“Yeah, sorry! It’s just...Harry’s quite funny about his things. I don’t think he would like anyone to touch his personal belongings.”

Sirius gave a warm smile at Damien and wrapped an arm around his shoulders, as he led him away from the sleeping Harry.

Once they were heading towards the Charms classroom Damien spoke again.

“Uncle Siri, what are you doing at Hogwarts?”

“My, aren’t you the one with all the questions today?” Sirius replied as he walked down the stairs with Damien. “I have an appointment with your dad today.”

When Damien gave Sirius a questioning look, Sirius explained.

“An appointment in Hogsmeade. I haven’t had a chance to spend much time with James and with the recent events, let’s just say I want some quality time with my best mate.”

Damien smiled at his uncle. His dad and Sirius would always get together once in a while to spend some time together. But Sirius was right. Ever since Harry had come to Hogwarts, James and Sirius didn’t get the chance to hang out as much.

Damien disappeared into his classroom, promising himself that he would check up on Harry as soon as class was over.

xxx

James was surprised to see Sirius walking into his room with Kingsley Shacklebolt. He was even more surprised when Sirius told him that Kingsley would be checking up on Harry, while James was going to spend an afternoon with Sirius in Hogsmeade.

After much persuasion James finally agreed to go with Sirius. He didn’t really want to go, especially when he found out that Harry was not well and was not going to be attending classes today. Sirius somehow managed to drag James away from Hogwarts and soon the two marauders were making their way to Hogsmeade.

Hogsmeade was still being rebuilt after the horrendous Daywalker attack, but Sirius told James that there was a great little pub on the

outskirts of Hogsmeade. Since James didn't know the way, he let Sirius lead the way. James was the one doing most of the talking and Sirius was patiently listening. After walking for a good half an hour, James realised that they had come to secluded part of Hogsmeade, where there were nothing more than small cliffs and hills. There was no sign of life anywhere and James tried to figure out what Sirius was up to.

"Padfoot, where are we?" James asked as he looked around him.

"We're taking a shortcut, it's just a bit further on." Sirius replied as he continued walking towards the cliffs.

"But, there doesn't seem to be any sign of any type of life here at all! Are you sure you know where you're going?" James asked. This wasn't the first time Sirius had led him somewhere and ended up getting utterly lost.

James continued to walk with Sirius for another twenty minutes, and all the while James was getting more and more anxious. They seemed to be going towards the cliffs and there were no signs of any sort of population, wizard kind or any other kind.

James climbed over a hill and stopped Sirius.

"Sirius, I think it's safe to say that we are lost! There is no pathway going down from here and we seem to be standing on a cliff with at least a 300 feet drop! So I think you should admit that you're lost." James said angrily. James didn't mind the fact they were lost, or that Sirius had made an obvious mistake, but the thing that was bothering James was the lack of communication Sirius was giving him. "Sirius! Are you listening to me? We're lost, I think we should go back!" James shouted at him.

Sirius slowly turned around and looked over at James, a weird triumphant sort of smile on his lips.

"Wrong Potter! We have come exactly where I intended."

xxx

Damien couldn't get rid of his uneasy feeling. He wondered what was wrong with him. As soon as it was lunch time Damien skipped the meal and instead made his way up to Harry's room. Harry had looked so awfully pale and sick. Damien wanted to make sure he was okay.

As Damien entered Harry's dorm, he was disappointed to see Harry still sleeping. Damien had hoped that Harry was awake by now. Damien came and stood next to Harry. He let his hand touch Harry's forehead and was relieved when Harry's skin felt normal. His fever seemed to come down. Harry was sweating as his face was very clammy. Damien pulled the covers away from Harry a little. He froze as he pulled the covers off. He caught a strange looking device connected to Harry's hand. It was a small tube inserting into the back of Harry's hand and looked rather painful. Damien leaned in closer to look at the tube and saw that two small vials were attached to the tube, obviously feeding whatever the potion was, into Harry's bloodstream.

Damien looked at Harry, confused as to what this thing was. Maybe it was something Madame Pomfrey had created, to help Harry. Damien kneeled next to Harry and looked closer at the two vials. He recognised one of the potions instantly. It was the Dreamless Sleep potion. Well, Sirius had said that Madame Pomfrey had given Harry some of that potion, but still, this device didn't look right.

Damien studied the other potion but couldn't figure out what it was. Damien looked up at Harry's face and then realised, that the tube was feeding Harry the sleep potion as well as some other potion. That's why Harry was still asleep. But that didn't seem right. Why would Harry have to be so heavily sedated? Damien made a decision and pulled the two vials from the device, instantly stopping the potions from entering Harry's bloodstream.

Harry still didn't wake up, so Damien pulled out his wand and pointed it at Harry's head. Harry would probably kill Damien for using an 'enervate' spell on him, but Damien needed to talk to him. Damien didn't know how, but he could tell that Harry was being sedated against his will.

"Enervate" Damien whispered.

At once Harry's emerald eyes fluttered open and for a moment he looked around confusedly. His eyes seemed to rest on Damien and again Damien got the feeling that something wasn't right.

"Pup?"

Damien felt his heart stop as he heard the word from Harry's mouth.

"What did you call me?" Damien asked in a voice, barely louder than a whisper.

Harry didn't answer, instead he sat up, groggily, and looked around the room, as if seeing it for the first time.

"What...where am I?" Harry said and Damien realised with a sick jolt, that although the person sitting in front of him looked like Harry, he didn't sound like Harry at all. In fact he sounded very much like...

"Uncle Siri?"

Harry looked up at Damien and a small frown appeared on his face.

"Who else am I going to be?"

Damien stepped away in horror, he realised what the second potion was that was being injected into his uncle. It was Polyjuice Potion. Damien felt his heart hammer at his insides, if this was Sirius in Harry's disguise, then that meant that Harry was in Sirius' disguise!

xxx

James looked at his best friend and couldn't figure out what was wrong with him. Sirius was looking at James with hatred. James stepped away from Sirius and asked in a strong voice.

"Sirius, what are you talking about? Why did you intend on coming here?"

Sirius only looked at James and smirked at him. He turned away from James and studied the view in front of him.

"It really is beautiful up here isn't it? So secluded. I mean anything could happen up here and the people around, won't even know." Sirius turned around and James saw the wand in his hand.

James had only managed to pull his own wand out when Sirius sent a stinging hex at James' hand, making the wand fly out of his hand. James grabbed at his injured hand and hissed in pain. He heard Sirius mutter the 'Accio' spell and he knew that Sirius had his wand.

James looked up at Sirius and was appalled at the sick smile on Sirius' face. He was obviously enjoying the look of pain on James' face.

"Who are you?" James asked, mentally berating himself for not realising that this wasn't Sirius. With so many Death Eaters around, it was a possibility that anyone could have imitated Sirius.

The fake Sirius laughed and replied.

"Oh come on, you must have figured it out by now! No, okay maybe I should help you."

The fake Sirius held his wand up to his own face and muttered 'Finite Incantateum'.

At once Sirius' long black hair began shrinking and his face began changing shape. His long nose was shrinking, and his eyes were changing shape as well. James stood, transfixed in horror, as he watched Sirius' long hair turn into a mop of untidy black locks and Sirius' brown eyes turned into a vivid emerald green.

"Harry?" James choked out as he took in the sight of his eldest son standing before him.

"Surprised?" Harry asked, and James realised that although Harry had changed back to his normal appearance, he still sounded like Sirius. Harry noticed as well and with a smirk plastered over his face, Harry pointed his wand at his own throat and whispered 'Finite Incantateum' again.

“There, much better.” Harry said in his own voice. “Now, we should really get started, we have a lot to get through.” Harry said before hitting James with a cutting hex.

xxx

Damien stood staring at his uncle, in Harry’s form.

“I don’t understand, what happened?” Damien asked.

“Well I came into see Harry, to see how he was. The last time I saw him he was still recovering from the Daywalker attack. I came in and Harry just attacked me. He knocked me out and...well, I don’t know what happened after that. I just woke up right now.”

Damien looked at the person sitting before him. It was unnerving to see Sirius looking like Harry.

“Isn’t there something you can do, you know to change back sooner than the potion wearing off?” Damien asked.

“Yeah, Finite Incantateum should do the trick.” Sirius answered and went to take out his wand, and then realising that not only was he wearing Harry’s clothes, but that his wand was missing as well.

“My wand!” Sirius exclaimed as he shared a panicked look with Damien.

‘Harry’s with dad, Merlin knows where and with Uncle Siri’s wand! This is so not good!’ Damien thought.

Damien took out his wand and pointed it at Sirius. Just as Damien pointed the wand at Sirius and muttered the spell, Sirius spotted the ring lying at the table. Sirius didn’t realise that Damien was about to do the spell and reached over to touch the ring. It had a weird look, black and silver, but the sliver almost looked...alive.

Damien said the incantation and at once Sirius’ appearance changed into his normal form. Damien stared at his uncle Sirius’ face. There was a large, ugly bruise on Sirius’ face, no doubt caused by Harry.

Damien noticed that there was something else odd about Sirius' appearance.

He was standing in front of Damien, holding something in his hand and was staring at it with awe. Damien realised that instead of holding Harry's black and silver ring, Sirius was holding a black pensive, with a mass of silvery substance, swimming inside.

"What is that?" Damien asked.

"It's a pensive, it must have Harry's memories." Sirius whispered.

Damien understood Harry's possessiveness over the ring now. It was actually the transfigured form of his pensive, holding memories that Harry wanted to keep safe.

"What could possibly be in that pensive that Harry was so desperate to keep hidden?" Damien wondered aloud.

"We'll have to figure that out later, for now we have to get to your dad." Sirius said and both of them hurried out from the room.

xxx

James felt his back slam onto the frozen ground and he bit back another cry. Harry was watching James struggle to get to his feet. Without his wand, James had no way to protect himself. James wasn't very good at physical combat, and even if he were, he had seen Harry in battle and knew that he wouldn't stand a chance against him.

"Why...why are you doing this, Harry?" James said as he straightened up, holding a hand to his side, as he was certain that he had broken quite a few ribs.

Harry waved his wand again and James felt a searing pain across his chest. He crumbled to his knees and tried to take a few deep breaths.

He looked up to see Harry bending over him, Harry was looking into James' eyes and he could see the hatred burning in those green orbs.

“That’s what I want to know, Potter! Why?” Harry’s voice shook lightly and James found that Harry was close to breaking down.

“Harry?” was all James could manage to say before Harry sent him flying through the air again, by a sweep of his hand.

James collapsed onto the ground and this time he cried out as he felt his leg snap. James looked up at Harry as the angry teen took a few steps towards him.

“I asked you so many times, but you never answered me! I thought that maybe you were only capable of hurting others, that you didn’t know any better! Even then I made excuses for you! But then I saw you with Damien and I saw how different you were with him. So I ask you again Potter! Why? Why me?”

James was struggling to sit up. He could taste the coppery taste of his blood in his mouth, and he spat some out before turning to Harry.

“Harry! Please, I don’t know what you’re talking about. Please just tell me!” James pleaded, hoping to make some sense out of Harry’s words. This, however seemed to be the wrong thing to say as Harry’s eyes hardened and he looked at James with cold fury.

“Of course, you don’t remember! Why should you? That’s fine Potter, because after today, I’ll finally be able to forget as well.” Harry replied while aiming the wand at James’ head.

“You’ll never get away with this, Harry. You’ll get caught!” James said, desperation evident in his voice. James didn’t want to die, especially at the hands of his own son. But he also didn’t want Harry to go to Azkaban.

Harry laughed a cold laugh and knelt in front of the helpless James.

“Oh but I will, you see Potter, I’m not the one who killed you. Everyone saw you leave Hogwarts with Black. The Aurors posted around Hogsmeade saw you come towards these cliffs with Black. It was Black who brought you here, and mercilessly killed you. It was Black’s wand that shot the many different curses at you, rendering you defenceless.”

At these words Harry held up the wand to show to James that it was indeed Sirius' wand that Harry was using to hurt James.

"I think it will be the perfect end to your *perfect* friendship, don't you?" Harry asked mockingly.

James felt rage build inside of him. Not only was Harry planning on killing his own father, he was going to place the blame on Sirius.

"No one will ever believe it! Sirius would never hurt me and everyone knows that!" James said angrily.

"Envy is one thing that can lead to many bizarre crimes. You have family, Black does not. You have children, Black does not. You have a somewhat nice home, Black only has the ruined home that has now been turned into the Headquarters, to your pathetic Order. You see Potter, Black has nothing when you have everything. You are even in a higher Auror rank than he is. I think that's enough to make one man insanely jealous enough to kill." Harry replied coolly.

"Lily and Damien! They will never believe it. They know Sirius well enough to know that he would never attack me!" James was desperate to show Harry that his plan wasn't going to work. It was in hope of Harry rethinking his decision to kill James.

Harry looked at James and for a moment, James saw Harry's eyes softening at the mention of Damien.

"Damien may not believe it, but with time he will have no other choice but to accept it. You should count your blessings Potter. I am sparing your wife, only because of Damien, otherwise she too would have been joining you. But I figured that Damien should at least have one parent alive."

At the mention of Lily and the threat made against her, James lost the small amount of patience he had and without caring for the consequences, James leapt towards Harry and tried to grab the wand from him. Harry fell back at James' attack but was soon on his feet and had shot another stinging hex at James. James was now lying on the ground, his legs were definitely broken as Harry sent the bone breaking curse at them earlier. James was covered in blood and he

couldn't breathe properly, an indication that many of his ribs were broken.

Harry stood over James and looked at him in fury.

"I think it's time to end this Potter." Harry said coldly.

He aimed the wand at James' head and was about to say the curse that would end James' life when James looked up at Harry and his hazel eyes locked with emerald green ones.

"Before you kill me, don't you think I have the right to know why? Why am I being tortured and killed by my own son?"

James knew at this point that he was going to die. But he didn't want to die without knowing why Harry wanted to kill him.

"You wish to plead ignorance to the very end? Very well but I'm not going to waste anymore time on you Potter. I want you to know though, I could have killed you at any point. I have spent the last four months in your company and I had more than one chance to end your pathetic life! I could have slit your throat while you slept, I could have killed you with my bare hands in Hogwarts. But I didn't want to suffer after killing you. I want you to know that you're responsible for bringing this onto yourself. All those times you faked concern towards me, told me you missed me, pretended to care! I wanted to kill you then and there, but I held back. Do you know why? Because I wanted to make you suffer. Twelve years of wanting this day to come, I finally get to take my revenge!"

Harry raised his wand and aimed at James.

"Harry, please!" James tried desperately.

"Don't! Don't beg for mercy, I'm not going to give you any! After all you never showed me any." Harry said the last part quietly. Harry steadied his hand, pointing at James.

"Goodbye, James Potter."

Harry sent a jet of purple light at James and James felt the spell hit him with a strong force, straight in his chest. James was thrown over the edge of the cliff and disappeared down 300 feet, towards the ragged rocks below.

Harry closed his eyes as he tried to get his racing heart to calm down. He had done it! He had finally killed James Potter.

xxx

Harry made his way over to Hogwarts. He was glad he had taken the invisibility cloak with him. Harry was going to make sure that he returned the cloak to Damien, as it was his possession now.

Harry went into the common room and looked around. When he was sure that no one was in the common room, Harry took off the cloak. Harry was going to go up to his dorm to put back the cloak and check up on Sirius, when the portrait door opened and a very worried Damien came inside. He spotted Harry straight away and hurried over to him.

"Harry! Where have you been? I've been going crazy looking for you." Damien was looking at Harry through very worried eyes.

"Damy, what's wrong?" Harry asked as he saw the panicked look in his eyes.

"Please Harry, tell me you didn't!" Damien said while giving Harry a pleading look.

"What are talking about?" Harry asked feeling dread creep into his chest.

Before Damien could answer Harry, the portrait to the common room opened and all the students poured in. Harry looked at the clock, just above the door. It was 5pm. The students had just finished their last class of the day. Harry looked at Damien and wordlessly agreed to go somewhere private.

Harry and Damien had just left the common room and were looking for an empty classroom when Harry bumped into Professor McGonagall.

"Mr Potter, just the student I was looking for. Professor Dumbledore wishes to have a quick word." Professor McGonagall told Harry.

Harry looked at Damien and then decided that it wouldn't hurt to see Dumbledore in his office, one last time. After all, Harry would be going home in about three hour's time.

"Fine" Harry replied and then turned to look at Damien.

"Damien, can you hold on until I see what Dumbledore wants?" Harry asked.

Damien nodded his head and made his way towards the Great Hall. Damien wasn't hungry but he had nothing else to do until Harry returned from his meeting with the Headmaster. Damien was desperate to ask Harry why he had imitated Sirius. It was obvious that Harry didn't do this in a bid to escape, as he had returned back to Hogwarts. But then why had Harry taken Polyjuice potion? And where was his dad?

xxx

Harry followed Professor McGonagall to the stone gargoyle that led to the Headmaster's office. Once again the gargoyle was already moved aside, permitting entrance.

Harry went up the stone stairs and entered the Headmaster's office, without knocking. Harry was expecting Dumbledore to be sitting at his desk, waiting for Harry, like usual. Instead Harry walked into the office and found that the Headmaster was standing in front of Harry, holding his wand loosely in his hand. The Headmaster was not alone. Harry swept the room with his eyes and saw a very pale and scared looking Lily, an absolutely livid looking Sirius and most shocking of all, a severely injured James standing with their wands pointing at Harry.

Harry felt like his heart had stopped. It wasn't possible! Harry had killed James. He threw him off a 300 foot high cliff. How could James

have survived? Harry never got a chance to voice his questions as two curses came at Harry at once. Harry felt the 'body binding' curse hit him and at once Harry felt his body go rigid. The second curse that hit him was a 'Stupefy' curse. As soon as it hit Harry he felt his world go black.

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Harry woke up and found himself in a different room. Harry tried to look around the room, to try and determine where he was, but Harry found that his movements were restricted as he was tied to a chair. Harry panicked and tried to wrench himself free, but it was no good. The bonds holding Harry's wrists, arms, ankles and legs were too strong for Harry to break out off. Harry tried to look around again and found that he was in James and Lily's living quarters. Harry could see the desk Lily usually sat at and found himself looking away in disgust at the many photos littering the front of her desk.

Just then the doors opened and James and Lily, followed by Sirius came inside. Harry felt his blood boil with rage. James had survived! After all Harry's waiting and plotting, James had still managed to survive the attack. And on top of that, Harry had screwed up at the very moment he needed to escape. Harry had no idea what time it was, but was certain that he wouldn't be able to escape from here by 8pm.

Harry looked away from James. The Auror was still wearing the blood covered robes and had his hand and arm heavily bandaged. Harry assumed that Poppy had fixed his broken bones, as James was walking around perfectly fine. James came over to Harry and brought a chair with him. He sat down facing Harry and looked at the raven haired teen before him.

"I think you owe me an explanation." James said quietly to Harry.

Harry refused to look at him. Above everything else Harry was ashamed. Ashamed that he had failed to take his revenge. Harry had so desperately wanted to hurt James, and now that he had the chance, Harry blew it.

Harry felt a hand under his chin and was forced to look up as James pulled Harry's face up.

"I want to know why you attacked me, what you meant by all those accusations? When have I ever hurt you, Harry? Answer me!"

James was holding back his temper. He wanted nothing better than to lash out at Harry. His own flesh and blood had tried to murder him. If it wasn't for Sirius, James would be long dead by now.

As if reading his thoughts Harry asked.

"How did you survive?"

James let go of Harry's face and looked over at his best friend.

"Sirius arrived just in time. When you blasted me off the cliff, Sirius was standing on the other side. He had brought Damien's wand and used it to save me from crashing onto those rocks." Harry looked over at Sirius and was glaring at him with furious hatred. "Now, I answered your question, you answer mine. Why did you attack me?" James asked again.

Harry brought his eyes over to James and James was once again shocked to see the angry tears glistening in them.

"If you're not going to answer that question, then answer this. Why did you come back to Hogwarts, surely you had your chance to escape, why return?" Sirius asked, hoping that once Harry started talking, it would become easier for him to answer all the questions.

"I wanted to see you getting arrested." Harry answered simply, looking directly at Sirius. "I had to return to release you from the Polyjuice potion and I also wanted to see her reaction to finding out that her husband had been killed." Harry jerked his head towards Lily as he spoke.

Lily had tears in her eyes as she stared at Harry.

"Why?" she choked out.

Again Harry looked away from her and refused to answer.

James had had about enough. He stood up and spoke to Harry in a strained voice.

“You’re leaving us no option. If you refuse to tell us why you acted in this way, then I’m afraid we have no other choice but to hand you over to the Ministry.”

Harry didn’t react to James’ words but Lily gasped in surprise and Sirius looked at James in shock. When Harry made no effort in responding, James left the room. Lily and Sirius followed James, locking Harry in the room alone.

No one realised that Damien was hiding under his invisibility cloak inside the room. When Damien saw that everyone had left, he pulled the cloak off him and walked towards Harry. Harry didn’t seem to be surprised at all.

“Should have known you would be here.” Harry said, without even looking at Damien.

Damien however was staring at Harry, with a mixture of shock and disgust.

“How could you Harry?! How could you try and hurt dad? What did he ever do to you?!” he shouted.

Harry didn’t respond. He sat, staring at the ground, refusing to look at Damien.

Damien knelt down, so that he was on the same eye level as Harry.

“You tricked us. All of us! You tricked me this morning, by pretending to be uncle Siri. You even called me by my pet name that only uncle Siri uses! You did all of this, all the while knowing that you were going to try and kill our own father! Why Harry?”

Harry still didn’t answer, but he looked up to see Damien in the eye.

"You should really watch the details you give out when talking Damien. You told me everything I needed to know, in order to fool everyone into thinking I was Sirius Black."

Damien realised that Harry was telling the truth. All the times Damien had been following Harry around, he had been making small talk and hadn't realised that he had been giving Harry information on everyone Damien knew.

"Harry, why did you attack dad? Why do you hate him so much? Dad really loves you. You have no idea how much you mean to him! Mum told me that when you were taken, you were just a baby and dad went crazy with grief. It took him months to just speak again, and you have the nerve to hurt a man that loves you so much!"

Damien stopped talking as he saw Harry snap his head up at Damien's words.

"What? What are you talking about Damien? I wasn't *taken* when I was a baby. I ran away from home when I was four!"

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James paced the floor in Dumbledore's office. Lily and Sirius were sitting with their heads in their hands. How could they have misunderstood Harry? Why couldn't they have seen how much he hated James? Enough to try and kill him! James stopped pacing the floor and collapsed in a chair next to Lily. He put his head into his hands and began desperately making a plan to make Harry talk. He had to know what made Harry attack him like that.

The door opened and Professor Dumbledore walked inside, holding something in his hands. When Sirius looked up he saw the black pensive, belonging to Harry. Sirius had completely forgotten about that.

He quickly told James and Lily about the ring and how Damien had accidentally changed it back to the pensive. James and Lily looked at the pensive in Dumbledore's hands and then at the Headmaster's face. James could see that the pensive was an important discovery,

but at the moment James didn't think it was as important as getting Harry to talk.

"We can figure out the memories later, Dumbledore. For now I think we should all concentrate on what to do about Harry." James said.

Lily looked at James in surprise.

"You...you're not giving Harry to the Ministry?" Lily asked, her voice trembling as she tried to fight her emotions.

James looked over at Lily and gave her a tired look.

"No, I'm not doing anything of the sort. I just said that to scare Harry into talking."

"Well, it's not working mate." Sirius helpfully pointed out.

"Yeah, I noticed!" James snapped back. He was aching all over and knew that he should be lying down just now, but James couldn't possibly rest, when he had a homicidal teen after the rest of the family.

"If I may make a suggestion." Dumbledore said quietly. "Perhaps you should view the contents of this pensive. It may answer the questions you're asking."

That was the first time that James noticed how pale and worried Dumbledore was looking right now. He had come into his office holding the pensive in his hands, and now he was suggesting that everyone should look at Harry's memories. James realised that Dumbledore had already seen the contents of Harry's pensive.

"You've already looked into it haven't you?" James asked. He tried to keep the accusatory tone away from his voice but failed.

Professor Dumbledore looked at James, no twinkle present in his blue eyes.

"Yes I have. I'm sorry, my boy, but I needed to prove that my suspicions were correct. Harry has been storing memories in this,

memories which he doesn't want anyone to see. I had to know why." Dumbledore had a haunted look on his face, as if the memories stored by Harry had aged the Headmaster more than anything else.

"What did you see?" James asked, beginning to fear the memories himself.

"I think it's better if you were to see them yourself. Lily you should go with James, Sirius, you as well."

James was beginning panic as he watched Dumbledore place the pensive on the desk and motion for the three of them to come over to the pensive.

Once Lily and Sirius were standing on either side of him, James saw Dumbledore poke the silvery substance with his wand.

"Early childhood memories." Dumbledore said in a clear voice.

James, Lily and Sirius felt themselves being thrown, head first into the pensive. The three adults hit the ground and stood up a little shakily to their feet. 'What is going on?' James thought to himself. He looked around him as the silvery mist cleared and James found himself standing in his own living room, in Godric's Hollow.

The room was exactly like it had been, approximately fifteen years ago. Lily gasped as she looked around her. 'Early childhood memories' James thought to himself. 'That's what Dumbledore had said hadn't he? But Harry was fifteen months old when he was taken from his home. What memories could Harry possibly have at that age?'

James felt Sirius and Lily come and stand next to him. They were all looking around. If this was Harry's memory, then he had to be here somewhere.

As if in response to James' thought a door opened and a small messy haired child came into the room. James had to calm his hammering heart as he took in the appearance of the small boy standing before him. The child was definitely Harry. He had the messy black hair and his emerald green eyes were hidden behind large black framed

glasses. Harry didn't look any older than two, possibly three years old. Lily was watching the 'child' Harry closely, as if trying to take in all the details she could. James and Lily had missed out on Harry's childhood, they never knew what their child looked like when growing up.

James saw the little boy come inside and close the door behind him. Harry was wearing clothes that looked worn out. 'What is going on?' James thought to himself.

Just then a loud shouting noise sounded across the room.

"Harry! Harry! Where are you? Get in here right now!" a male voice sounded. The three adults jumped as did Harry.

Harry quickly ran over and opened the door at the other end of the room, which the three adults recognised as the kitchen. Harry opened the door and walked in to find James and Lily sitting at the kitchen table.

James and Lily looked at their counterparts in Harry's memories and felt a shiver run down their spines. They were identical copies, but the expressions on their faces were so hard and cruel. James shuddered as he saw the 'fake' James glaring at Harry. That's what they were, they were fake, as James and Lily had lost Harry at the age of fifteen months. James heard Lily cry out as they saw the fake James raise a hand and slap the child standing before him. Harry crumbled to the ground and held his small hand up to his cheek, which was already forming a bruise.

"How many times do I have to tell you, you little shit?! I don't want to see your sorry face when we have guests over. You just embarrassed us!"

The three horrified adults watched as the fake Lily ordered Harry to get up and told him to go to his room and that the young child was not to get any dinner that night. The child ran from the room with tears in his eyes and James, Lily and Sirius wished they could cause physical harm to the fake parents sitting at the table.

The room began to spin and soon the mist cleared to show a small room with no windows. There was a small bed in the corner and on top of the bed sat a small child. Harry was trying to put something back together again. James looked closer and saw that the young child was trying to fix his broken glasses, the muggle way, only, one of the child's hands was heavily bandaged and his small fingers were having difficulty in moving. James knelt next to the crying child and wished he could wipe away the tears. Harry cried as he wrapped a small piece of sellotape around his glasses.

Just then a booming sound was heard and the child jumped in fright before cowering away in fear. James didn't realise what was happening. The door behind him opened with a bang and James spun around to see a very forbidding looking 'James' standing at the door.

"You've done it again haven't you?" the fake James said as he towered into the room. The real James saw Harry shake in fear as he spoke.

"N-no d-dad I swear, I-I didn't."

James felt his heart actually break. Harry had called him 'dad'. He had actually called him dad in his memories.

The fake James grabbed the small boy by the hair and pulled him from the bed. James cried out as he saw the fake James throw Harry onto the floor and kick him viciously in the ribs. Harry cried out and tried to curl into a protective ball, to protect himself from his 'fathers' punishment.

"As if it wasn't enough that you completely destroyed our lives! You are staring to destroy others lives as well! How dare you get into a fight with the neighbour's children? They are muggles! You used magic to hurt them, didn't you?" the fake James shouted as he continued to kick the three year old.

Harry cried out to each blow and only when the fake James stopped to take a breath, did Harry attempt to speak.

"I- I didn't. They...they hurt me. They p-pushed me and then b-broke my glasses." Harry said as he tried to sit up.

The fake James only sneered at Harry and kicked him again before taking off his belt.

"No, no, no, oh please God, no!" James cried out as he saw the belt in the fake James' hand.

James, Lily and Sirius all cried out as they saw the fake James hold the belt in one hand while holding the whimpering child down with his foot.

"You've misbehaved Harry, so now it's time for your punishment. You're going to be so sorry!"

James felt his world crash as he saw the fake James bring down the belt onto Harry. The small child cried out and turned onto his back, in an attempt to protect his chest and stomach.

James fell to the ground as he watched his child being mercilessly beaten by a monster that had his face. James was crying as he heard Harry call out and beg his 'dad' to stop and that he was going to be good and never use his magic again.

James saw the three year old, scream every time the metal buckle tore into his small back. Within seconds, Harry's back was bleeding profusely from numerous welts. Lily and Sirius were crying and screaming for the memory to stop. Suddenly the memory did stop and the familiar silver mist surrounded them.

When the mist cleared up James found himself on the kitchen floor. He looked up at Lily and Sirius through his tear filled eyes. James couldn't believe it. Voldemort hadn't lied to Harry about James and Lily. Instead he had filled Harry's mind with fake memories of such abuse, that Harry hated his parents with every fibre of his being.

James saw the fake Lily come bustling into the kitchen. She was dressed up, as if she were going out. As she moved out of the way James, Lily and Sirius saw Harry standing by the door. He looked a little bit older than his last memory. He was still wearing worn out

clothes and was very skinny, like he hadn't been fed regularly. His bright emerald eyes were now dull and empty and were still behind broken glasses.

"Now listen up, the food is in the oven, don't burn it! You know how your father can be." the fake Lily was instructing Harry. The small child looked over at the oven and nodded his head.

He looked at his mother, walking around, putting her earrings on as she got ready to go out. Just before she walked by him the small child grabbed onto her dress.

"Mum, please, can't I come with you? I don't want to be alone with them." Harry whispered in a fearful voice.

The real Lily had to put her hand over her mouth to stifle the cry that left her lips at the sight. James and Sirius looked at each in concern. Who were the 'they' that Harry was referring to?

The fake Lily shook herself away from Harry and ran her hand over her dress, as if shaking away invisible dirt that Harry had left on her dress.

"No! You can't come. How many times are you going to ask me? Honestly Harry, you can be so troublesome at times!"

Harry pulled himself away from his mum and looked away from her. A defeated look on his young face. Just then the doorbell sounded and the three adults saw Harry visibly tense up. As the fake Lily rushed to open the door, the three adults saw Harry move away from the door. Harry was trying to push himself further into the wall, as if hoping to disappear into it.

Just then the fake Potters walked into the kitchen and this time they were with the fake Sirius. The real Sirius looked at his fake counterpart. He was beginning to wonder why Dumbledore had sent him into Harry's memories. Now Sirius was hoping that he didn't find out. Sirius didn't want to know what kind of monster he was in Harry's memories.

“Ah, Harry, how are you?” Sirius said as he ruffled Harry’s hair. Harry tensed up but didn’t dare move out of the way.

As quickly as he could Harry moved towards the oven and started checking on the chicken that was being cooked on the moment. The fake Lily left and the two friends, James and Sirius sat in the dining room, leaving Harry alone in the kitchen. Harry moved around slowly and winced every time he had to bend over to pick something up. The three adults realised that the child must have broken ribs as Harry placed a hand on his side tentatively.

Harry heard the conversation between his father and Godfather.

“I just don’t know, Padfoot. I never thought that my son would turn out like this. He is such a squib, he can’t even do the simplest of spells yet. The only thing he can do is stupid tricks on our muggle neighbours kids.” the fake James was saying.

“I know it sucks, I mean imagine having such a pathetic Godson. What age is the little shit anyway?” came the fake Sirius’ voice.

“Four, I mean when I was four I was doing magic all the time. I know that I’m just more gifted than he is but look how weak he is. His eyesight is worse than mine! I swear by the time he is a teen, he’ll be completely blind!” James said in a voice that was obvious that he couldn’t care less if Harry did become blind.

“Well, maybe you should stop hitting him in the head all the time. You know what they say. Too many head injuries can lead to all sorts of deformities.” Sirius said with a chuckle and both men dissolved into fits of laughter.

The child, Harry, brushed away the tears that came at listening to these words and continued laying out the place settings at the table. There were only two table settings, for the two men in the house.

The real James, Lily and Sirius were looking as if they were going to be sick. They couldn’t believe the horrific lies that had been fed into Harry’s mind. No wonder he hated all of them.

Just as the small child checked on the chicken, there was commotion near the door and Harry spun around to see the fake Sirius standing at the door.

“Hey Harry, what are you doing?” Sirius asked as he came towards the frightened child.

The real Sirius growled at his fake counterpart, wishing he could tear into him.

Harry gave Sirius a scared look and then replied.

“Nothing uncle.”

The fake Sirius swooped over Harry and viciously backhanded him. Harry swayed on the spot but managed to keep standing upright.

“I’m not your uncle, you weak piece of crap! You address me as Master Black, understand!”

“Y-yes, Master Black.” Harry replied as he wiped the blood away from his lip with the back of his sleeve.

“What you making, Harry?” Sirius asked as he walked over and peered at the oven.

“Chicken, Master Black.” Harry answered with obvious fear in his voice.

The real Potters and Sirius had tears of frustration and anger as they watched Harry cower before the fake Sirius.

“Hmm, looks a bit underdone to me. I like my meat well done.” and with that, the fake Sirius pointed his wand at the chicken and laughed heartlessly as the chicken began turning black and smoke began coming out of the oven door.

Harry gasped and ran to the oven. His small hands fumbling with the hot oven door, trying to get it to open so that he could save the meal. The fake Sirius continued to laugh as Harry couldn’t get the door

open. Harry began to cry and tug at Sirius' hand, hoping to pull the wand away from the food.

"Please don't! Dad will kill me! Please, Master Black, please don't!" Harry begged as he tried to get the wand away from the burning chicken.

At last the fake Sirius pulled his hand away and Harry ran to the oven, to pull out a completely burnt and destroyed chicken.

"Oh James! Prongs! You better come and see what Harry just did!" the fake Sirius shouted. Harry looked up at his Godfather. His green eyes wide with fear.

"No! Please don't!" Harry pleaded but Sirius just laughed as the fake James rushed into the kitchen.

"What happened?" James asked and then he saw the destroyed chicken in the oven and Harry standing in front of the oven, tears falling down his face.

"Why you little shit! You did this on purpose! You're going to get it now!" the fake James grabbed the trembling boy and smacked him across the face before throwing him onto the floor and kicking him mercilessly. Harry didn't even cry out. He held in his cries and shut his eyes tightly.

The three horrified adults stood in the middle of this memory and cried, as it was clear by the way the young Harry was acting, that he had been through this type of treatment before.

Suddenly the fake James turned around and saw the oven, still on. He smirked at Harry as he pulled the four year old up to his feet.

"You burn my food, I get to burn you." he hissed at Harry.

The real James cried out and ran towards the fake James. But James couldn't do anything to stop what had already happened. He watched in horror as the fake James picked up the screaming child, who was frantically trying to get away.

“No dad! Please don’t! Please dad, I’m sorry, I’m sorry for everything! Please don’t.” Harry begged as he tried to futilely run away, but the fake James carried the four year old child over to the burning hot oven and opened the oven door.

Lily, Sirius and James were crying hard as they watched with horrified eyes, as the fake James held down the child’s small hand onto the metal tray inside the oven.

Harry screamed out in agony and thrashed wildly in his ‘fathers’ grasp. Only once the kitchen was filled with the horrible smell of burning flesh, did the fake James, let Harry go. The small child huddled on the floor and tried to breathe, as all the screaming had left him breathless.

The fake James and Sirius barked out orders for Harry to clean up the mess and then go to bed, without anything to eat. The two monsters left the weeping child on the kitchen floor, cradling his bleeding, severely burnt hand close to his chest.

Slowly the child got up and carefully opened the door leading to the back garden. Once standing outside in the cool air, the four year old looked into the darkness looming in front of him. He then looked back inside the house, tears still running down his cheeks. It was clear to see what thoughts were running through Harry’s mind. ‘What point was there to stay in a home that was treating you like this? Was it not better to leave and find another place to live? Any other place would be better than to live here.’

And so, as the three adults watched, the four year old Harry walked into the darkness ahead of him and never once looked back at the Potter’s home.

James, Lily and Sirius felt themselves being pulled from the memories and soon felt their feet slam onto the floor of Dumbledore’s office. Before James could say a single word, the Headmaster rushed over to him.

“We have to hurry, take Harry and go!” Dumbledore said as he ushered James and Lily to the door.

“Dumbledore! What happened?” asked James and was surprised to hear his own voice tremble.

“Death Eaters! Hogwarts is under attack!”

Before James could react there was a terrible scream from outside.

James, Lily, Dumbledore and Sirius rushed to the window and the sight before them made their breaths hitch in their throat.

There were no less than thirty Death Eaters duelling fiercely with the Aurors. The scream they heard came from Tonks, as she was hit by the Cruico curse.

But the sight that made James cry out was the sight of Bella embracing someone. As she pulled away, James saw Harry standing in front of Bella. Harry looked up towards Dumbledore's office window.

Harry's burning emerald green eyes met with James and the hatred that James saw in them, made his heart break. James understood the hatred now. According to Harry's memories, James had abused Harry to such an extent that Harry had to leave home at the tender age of four.

Before James or anyone else could do anything, Harry tore his eyes away from the four adults standing at the window and took Bella's outstretched hand. James and Lily watched helplessly as Harry disappeared with Bella, back to Lord Voldemort.

XX

Chapter Twenty Nine

James watched helplessly as his son was taken by Bella, back to Lord Voldemort. Back to the monster that had filled Harry's mind with horrific lies about his true parents. Without thinking, James pulled out his wand and rushed to the door, intending to kill as many Death Eaters as possible.

Sirius and Lily followed by Dumbledore rushed out with James. Soon the four adults were standing outside. They arrived just in time to see the last of the Death Eaters disappear. They had got what they came for. They had managed to take Harry back to their Master. James let out a frustrated scream and collapsed onto the grass, not caring that most of the school was looking out of the windows. Lily and Sirius helped James up and led him back into the school, while Professor Snape, Professor Dumbledore and many of the Hogwarts staff helped the injured Aurors. Many of the Aurors had been killed by the Death Eaters. Thankfully no student had been hurt as all of them were inside the castle at the time of the attack.

James was brought back up to Dumbledore's office. James was completely broken. He couldn't stop the tears from falling from his eyes. He felt Lily's warm embrace and both parents hugged each other and cried. They felt they had lost Harry all over again. Suddenly James pulled away from Lily

"Damien!" he whispered.

In all the commotion, James and Lily had completely forgotten about their youngest son. Both parents fled from the office and ran to the Gryffindor common room.

"Damien! Damien! Ron, where's Damien, have you seen him?" James asked the red headed prefect.

"No, I don't know where he is." Ron replied. He and Hermione were trying to calm the hysterical students, since all of them had seen the Death Eater attack.

James tore away from the room and searched the castle for Damien.

“Please, please, don’t let anything happen to him!” James prayed as he ran to the Great Hall, in search of Damien.

Just as James Lily and Sirius turned the corner, leading to the dungeons, they saw Damien making his way, slowly towards them. He had his head lowered and was walking very slowly, as if taking each step was painful. James and Lily ran towards Damien and had him a tight embrace.

When they let go of the thirteen year old, they saw Damien’s hazel eyes were filled with tears.

“Damy?” Lily whispered, wondering why Damien looked so broken.

“I had to...you...you understand right? He...he wouldn’t listen to anything I would say. He...he didn’t believe me.” Damien was speaking in a hushed tone, and his eyes looked unfocused, as if he were talking but not quite aware of who he was talking to.

James quickly led Damien back to the Potters living quarters. Once the three adults and Damien were safely inside, James turned to Damien.

“Damy, what happened?”

James could see the empty chair that Harry had been tied to, only twenty minutes ago. James shuddered as he thought about how they all had treated Harry, feeding his mind more nightmares about his parents. James gave himself a mental shake, he couldn’t think about that just yet, he had to deal with Damien right now.

“Damien, what happened?” James repeated the question.

Damien brought his tired hazel eyes to his parents.

“I let him go.” Damien said quietly, not looking at anyone in the room.

James felt his heart plummet to his stomach.

"You let him go, why? What were you thinking?!" James shouted at Damien. James knew that Damien was extremely upset just now, but he couldn't control his anger.

Damien had let Harry escape and go back to Lord Voldemort. The damage done was catastrophic! James knelt in front of Damien and forced the teen's face up, so that James could look into Damien's tear filled eyes.

"Why?" James asked.

Damien looked away and then answered.

"Because you were going to send him to Azkaban. I didn't want Harry to go to Azkaban. Harry's been lied too, he thinks that he ran away from home. He doesn't know the truth, and no matter what I said Harry wouldn't believe me." Damien said all this without looking at either of his parents.

"Damien, how do you know all of this?" Lily asked. She was referring to the fact that James had threatened Harry with Azkaban and the lies that Harry had grown up with.

"I heard dad telling Harry that he was going to send him to Azkaban. I was in this room, under the invisibility cloak. After you all left I went over to Harry and asked him why he attacked dad. Harry wouldn't tell me at first but after I mentioned how much dad had missed him, when he was taken as a baby, Harry told me. He said that...that he was..." Damien couldn't go on. He put his head into his hands and fresh tears began trailing down his cheeks.

Lily came over and put her arms around him, trying to comfort him. When Damien couldn't get himself to recount his conversation with Harry, Sirius suggested that Damien take out the memory and that way James and Lily could see for themselves what had happened.

Slowly Damien brought out his wand and closed his eyes. He was bringing forward the memory and when he pulled his wand away from his temple, there was a silvery thread attached to his wand.

James took the memory and put it into the grey coloured pensive that belonged to Lily. Soon James, Lily and Sirius were standing inside Damien's memory. They watched as Damien knelt in front of Harry, who was still tied to the chair and was looking utterly defeated.

"Harry, you tricked us. All of us! You tricked me this morning, by pretending to be uncle Siri. You even called me by my pet name that only uncle Siri uses. You did all of this, all the while knowing that you were going to try and kill our own father! Why Harry?"

The three adults saw Harry look up at Damien.

"You should really watch the details you give out when talking Damien. You told me everything I needed to know, in order to fool everyone into thinking I was Sirius Black."

James looked at Damien's reaction. Damien sat before Harry and had a look of utter shock on his face. It was obvious that Damien hadn't realised how much attention Harry was giving to Damien's small talk.

"Harry, why did you attack dad? Why do you hate him so much? Dad really loves you. You have no idea how much you mean to him! Mum told me that when you were taken, you were just a baby and dad went crazy with grief. It took him months to just speak again, and you have the nerve to hurt a man that loves you so much!"

James felt a rush of pride at Damien's words. Damien knew that James loved Harry. Unfortunately it was going to take more than that to make Harry believe it.

"What? What are you talking about Damien? I wasn't *taken* when I was a baby. I ran away from home when I was four!"

The three adults watched Damien pull back from Harry. A look of shock and surprise on his young face.

"No! No, Harry. It can't be! Mum and Dad wouldn't lie to me. They told me that you were taken away by a Death Eater. You were only fifteen months old! You must have been lied too..." Damien stopped talking as he saw Harry glare at Damien.

James watched as Harry responded through gritted teeth.

“You’re the one who was lied too, Damien! No one’s told me anything! I remember perfectly well what happened the night I left home. If I can even call that place a ‘home’. Tell me Damien, if your parents never lied to you, then why didn’t they tell you about me? Why keep me a bloody secret from everyone? Huh? Maybe because they never expected me to survive! How the hell can a four year old survive on his own? They thought that they had gotten rid of me for good. If I hadn’t been caught by the Order and forced back into the Potters lives, you would never have even known that I existed!”

James fought another shower of emotions as Harry’s words stung him. Part of what Harry was saying was true. James and Lily had never talked about Harry to Damien. They had always acted as if Harry didn’t exist in front of Damien. They didn’t want to scare Damien into thinking that he wasn’t safe. If his older brother can be taken away by Lord Voldemort’s men, right from under James and Lily’s very own roof, then what chance would Damien stand?

Also, James felt that they had given up on Harry too soon. They never looked for Harry hard enough. Everyone just assumed that Lord Voldemort had killed Harry, because of the prophecy. No one had ever considered the possibility that Harry might have survived. If they had found Harry sooner, maybe all of this wouldn’t have happened. Harry would not have had such an awful, terrifying childhood. Even though James knew that the memories he had witnessed were fake, they still tore his heart open, knowing that Harry believed them to be true and had grown up believing them.

James was brought out of his thoughts as he heard Damien respond back to Harry.

“But Harry, I can’t see why Mum and Dad would lie. What possible benefit would come from lying?” Damien stopped talking and his hazel eyes widened in realisation. “Harry, why did you leave home? You said you ran away, why would you run away from mum and dad?”

Harry didn’t answer and looked away from Damien. Harry seemed to be making an effort to hold his tongue.

“Harry? Please tell me, why would you run away from home?” Damien asked again.

“Trust me Damien, you of all people don’t want to know what truly happened.”

Harry brought his green eyes back to Damien and the three adults watching the memory, saw the look of hurt and betrayal in Harry’s green orbs.

“Harry, you can’t be...please Harry, tell me you don’t think that mum and dad would have hurt you. They couldn’t hurt anyone...” Damien was once again cut off by Harry.

“I don’t *think* that they hurt me, I *know* they hurt me! I remember everything! They think that I was only a child, a four year old, pathetic, stupid child! What can he remember? But I remember everything, Damien. I lived that nightmare over and over again, until I had to cast those memories away! I took them out of my mind, so that they don’t haunt me when I sleep. That’s what they did to me! Not only did your mum and dad torture me when I was a child, they continued to hurt me when I was away from them, so much that I had to physically remove my memories! There Damien! I told you, is that what you wanted to hear?”

Harry was breathing heavily and had unshed tears glistening in his eyes. Damien was close to tears as well. Damien tried one last time to convince Harry that he was wrong.

“I’m not going to argue with you. If you say that you remember what mum and dad did to you, then I’ll believe you. But I just want to ask one question. You say that you remember everything that happened to you, that you ran away from home when you were four years old, right?”

Harry only nodded his head, keeping his eyes focused on Damien.

“Well, Harry, if that’s true then how come you don’t remember me?”

Harry looked at Damien, with a confused expression, as if he didn’t understand the question.

“I’m three years younger than you. So if you were four years old, that would make me one year old, around the time you ran away. If you remember everything that happened to you, then surely you would remember me as well. Yet when we met for the first time, back in Grimmauld place, you were really shocked that you had a younger brother.”

James, Lily and Sirius shared a look of relief with each other. They felt immense relief and joy that at least Damien never believed the lies that were fed to Harry. Damien had brought up a very good point, surely this would make Harry question the logic of those memories.

“I don’t know why I can’t remember you Damien. I only remember the horrible things that were said and did to me. Maybe you...”

Harry’s words were cut off by a huge blast that came from outside. Harry looked at Damien and asked him.

“Damy, what time is it?”

Damien looked at Harry in bewilderment.

“What?”

“The time! Damien, what time is it?”

Damien looked at his watch around his wrist.

“8pm, why?”

Harry looked desperately at the door.

“It’s them, the Death Eaters!”

Damien looked at the door in horror.

“Death Eaters! Here at Hogwarts. It can’t be! Hogwarts is too well protected!”

Harry gave a small laugh and turned his head over to look at Damien’s terrified face.

“Nothing can be protected forever.”

Damien looked at the doors again.

“They’re here for you, aren’t they?” Damien asked, already knowing the answer.

“Yes. I was supposed to go home today.”

James, Lily and Sirius looked at Harry in shock. So that’s why Harry attacked James today, since he knew that Death Eaters were coming to rescue him later on and that he would escape before anyone found out what had happened.

Damien looked at Harry again and saw the sadness in Harry’s eyes. Suddenly Damien took out his wand and pointed it at Harry’s wrists.

“REDUCTO” Damien yelled and the bonds holding Harry down disappeared. It took Harry a second to realise what had just happened. Damien repeated the same action for the bonds holding Harry’s legs as well. Harry sprung to his feet at once.

“Damien, what...?”

“Just go Harry! If you don’t leave now, you’ll end up in Azkaban.”

Damien was talking to Harry but he couldn’t even look him in the eye. Harry was staring at the teen before him. Unable to comprehend what had just happened.

“You realise what you’re doing, don’t you? I tried to kill James Potter. I’ll try again until I succeed.” Harry said, and he watched Damien’s reactions very carefully as he spoke.

Damien flinched at the word ‘kill’ but didn’t make any attempt at stopping Harry from leaving.

“I’m helping you escape because I don’t want you to end up in Azkaban. You’re my brother and always will be, but if you try to harm mum or dad again Harry, you’re going to have to kill me first. I’m not going to let anything happen to them until I am around.” Damien

didn't have any sort of threat in his voice. He was merely stating the facts.

Harry smiled at Damien, but not in his usual smirk like fashion. The smile that James, Lily and Sirius saw was as genuine as they had ever seen on Harry.

"Typical Gryffindor." Harry said as he playfully pushed Damien.

Despite the heart breaking situation, Damien smiled back at Harry.

"And damn proud of it too."

Harry left to go towards the door. Just before he left he turned around and spoke to Damien, for what was probably the last time.

"Stay inside Hogwarts. They can't come inside."

With that said Harry left and Damien collapsed to the ground, tears falling from his eyes as he watched his brother leave all of them, again.

James, Lily and Sirius felt themselves leave the memory and were once again standing in the same room as the memory was, but were standing over an exhausted looking Damien.

James went over and picked up his son, from the chair he was sitting in and embraced him. He whispered his apologies in Damien's ear and felt the child in his arms sob harder. Soon Damien was led up to the Gryffindor common room and handed over to Ron and Hermione who took over the grieving boy instantly.

xxx

James and Lily wanted nothing more than to crawl into their beds and sleep until this nightmare was over. A part of James wished that all of this was a nightmare. That he would wake up and find himself in his bed and that Harry would still be here at Hogwarts with him.

James and Lily sat on the ground, next to Lily's desk. Both heart broken parents began blaming themselves for not realising what Harry was going through.

"How could we not have seen this? How could we have been so blind to Harry's reactions towards us?" Lily said in a small voice. "He never hid the fact that he hated all of us, but we all just pushed it aside. Not wanting to deal with it, hoping that Harry will just snap out of it. How could we not have questioned him about this?" Lily continued.

Suddenly Lily clasped her hand over her mouth and looked at James with shock in her green eyes.

"Oh my God, James! Remember when we spoke to Harry for the first time, back at the Headquarters? Do you remember what he said to us? He asked us if we were disappointed that he had survived, he said that we 'didn't expect him to survive' remember? At that time we had assumed that he was referring to the incident with his capture because he had been severely injured, but that's not what he was talking about. He was referring to the fact that he had ran away from home twelve years ago! He meant that we must be disappointed that Harry had survived and grown up. And when he was talking to Damien he said the same thing he said 'Maybe they never expected me to survive! How the hell can a four year old survive on his own?' It was all there, all the evidence that Harry had been lied too, we just never picked up on it."

James realised that Lily was right. Harry had dropped many hints, had reacted strangely towards James and Lily, but both parents had never picked up on it. Everything made sense now. The way Harry used to glare at him, the strange remarks about James being violent and the way Harry had freaked out when they had caught Damien at the Headquarters. James cringed as he remembered the words he had spoken to Damien in front of Harry,

'The Weasley's are outraged at your behaviour...you are going to be so sorry.....Your punishment will be decided tomorrow...'

These words must have brought back those horrific memories to Harry, that's why he had stood up for Damien. He must have thought

that Damien had gone through the same treatment as Harry himself had suffered.

‘But surely Harry must have realised that Damien was treated fairly?’ James thought to himself. At this point James remembered something else. The words Harry had bitterly spoken to him just that afternoon,

‘...but then I saw you with Damien and I saw how different you were with him. So I ask you again Potter! Why? Why me?’

James could have slapped himself. How could he have been so stupid? How could he not have figured out what Harry was suggesting? It was obvious that Harry couldn’t talk about what happened to him. How could Harry turn to his supposed abuser and say, ‘remember you tortured and tormented me twelve years ago to such an extent that I ran away, well I think we should sit and discuss it, now that I have grown up.’

James remembered the conversation he had with Harry in his dorm, just over a month ago. He remembered trying to get Harry to open up and tell him why Harry hated him so much. Harry’s words came back to him.

‘Just watching you sit there and talk to me as if nothing ever happened, makes my blood boil...Think Potter, can’t you think of any reason I would have to hate you? Try and remember.’

James remembered how Harry was so close to breaking down that day. The tears that had glistened in Harry’s eyes should have been enough for James to figure things out.

James put his head into his hands, not wanting to think about how badly he had failed Harry. Suddenly another memory came in front of his closed eyes. The day James had found out that Harry had not taken any potions that were supposed to heal him. James remembered how Harry had flinched away from him when James had raised his hand. Why didn’t James realise that something wasn’t right back then? The fact that Harry had moved away from James, for fear that James might hurt him, should have sent off alarm bells in his mind. But James had not let himself think about those things. He kept

pushing them to the back of his mind, hoping that he would not have to deal with them. He was too caught up with being at Hogwarts with his wife and children, too involved with ways to bring Harry into their future, without even thinking about Harry's past.

Lily remembered another incident which should have made them realise that something was not right. Just after the attack with those Vampires, when Harry was recovering in the hospital wing. The way that Harry had spoke to James,

'So all of a sudden you have my welfare at heart do you?...you're the one who should think about what you're saying and to whom. 'Your job to care?' You have no right to say that, especially to me!'

Lily shut her eyes tightly. She had spent most of the past fifteen years imagining life with her eldest son, with Harry. Now that fate had given her that chance, she had completely blown it. Harry had been given to them and in the four months that he spent with them, James and Lily had managed to ignore all of Harry's comments and strange behaviour resulting in them losing Harry all over again.

The door opened and Sirius came inside. He looked sadly over at the grieving parents.

"Dumbledore wants so see us." Sirius said simply. James had hoped that Dumbledore would leave them alone for one night but that wasn't possible.

James, Lily and Sirius made their way up to Dumbledore's office. They had to talk about Harry's fake memories, they had to sort out a few things. As James made his way into the Headmaster's office he saw Dumbledore standing at the window, looking at the grounds of Hogwarts. The grounds were covered in blood, either belonging to Aurors or Death Eaters. Hogwarts grounds had never had bloodshed staining it before. It truly was a sign of bad things to come.

Professor Dumbledore turned to see the three exhausted adults come into the office. Dumbledore led them towards his desk. Harry's pensive was still lying on the desk, the silvery mist swirling within it. James found himself looking away from it.

"Dumbledore, how bad is it? How many of our men have fallen tonight?" Sirius asked.

Dumbledore sighed and gave Sirius a sad look.

"I think there have been twelve casualties and four more that are severely injured. They have been taken to St Mungo's Hospital."

James looked at Dumbledore. He felt immensely guilty. The casualties had happened because of his son. The Death Eaters had come into the grounds of Hogwarts, ready to kill anyone standing in the way to take away Harry. They fallen bodies could easily have been students. And all the while this was happening, James and Sirius were not there to help fight against the Death Eaters.

"James, please do not hold yourself responsible. You and Sirius were fighting a different type of battle at the time, one that I would not wish anyone to face." Dumbledore tried to comfort James.

James gave Dumbledore a weak, grateful smile. Dumbledore pointed at the Pensive.

"I hope that you understand the ramifications of these memories." Dumbledore said.

James looked at the Headmaster, unable to determine the meaning of these words.

"Ramifications? Harry hates all of us because of these fake memories! What other ramifications can there be Dumbledore?" James asked with anger coursing through him. How could Dumbledore be so insensitive?

"James, I didn't mean to sound tactless. I only meant that the damage done by these memories is much worse than you think." Dumbledore answered.

"How can things be any worse? Harry has grown up with these fake memories, nothing can be worse than that!" Lily responded.

At her words Dumbledore looked, if possible, even more solemn.

"I am afraid that things are much, much worse Lily. You see, these memories are not fake."

It took a moment for the three adults to comprehend the meaning of Dumbledore's words.

"What? What do you mean they're not fake! Of course they are fake! How can you even suggest that we would do anything of that sort? You were there! You know how Harry was taken fifteen years ago!" Lily screamed at the Headmaster.

"Lily, calm down. You misunderstand me. I would never accuse any of you of such atrocities. What I meant was that the memories in this pensive are not fake. They are real memories, experiences, felt and lived by our young Harry."

James felt as if someone had hit him with a hammer. All the breath was knocked out of him. They were real! The memories were not fake, they were real! Harry had suffered the physical and mental abuse for real. His child had been at Voldemort's mercy and this is what that monster did to him. Before, the only thing sustaining James was the fact that the memories were not real, they had never happened. Harry had not really been beaten and abused. But at Dumbledore's words this reassurance came crashing down. Harry had suffered. While James, Lily and Damien were enjoying their lives, Harry had been suffering at Voldemort's hands.

Dumbledore continued speaking.

"When a memory is modified or created artificially, there are tell tale signs that show this. While many wizards can't recognise them, I however can see the difference. I'm afraid that the memories I have witnessed are all genuine. Harry has lived through all that you saw in the pensive tonight. My guess is that Voldemort had someone imitate the three of you, James, Lily and Sirius. Whether Voldemort himself was part of the memory, I don't know. As I was saying earlier, the ramifications of these memories are very serious. Not only has Voldemort made sure that Harry will never return to his rightful parents, he has planted a deep seated hatred for followers of the Light. He has made Harry believe that followers of the Light are just as heartless as any Death Eater. Harry sees Voldemort as his saviour

as it is Voldemort who takes Harry in and brings him up. Now this makes Harry's loyalty to Voldemort much more understandable." Dumbledore continued.

At James, Lily and Sirius' puzzled expression, Dumbledore explained.

"I have looked further into the pensieve. After Harry leaves home, he is found by Nagini, who leads him to Voldemort. It seems that Harry is a parselmouth."

Lily couldn't help the gasp that left her mouth and James and Sirius were looking close to crying out in shock as well.

"I am again assuming that this is something Voldemort passed onto Harry, the night he gave Harry the scar. Of course, Harry thinks, it is a rare gift that he possesses from birth. Nagini leads Harry to Voldemort, who helps heal Harry's injuries. Harry is then asked by Voldemort if he wishes to stay with him as his child, since Voldemort can sense the potential of great power in Harry. Harry is only a frightened child and accepts Voldemort's invitation. So you see, Voldemort broke Harry just so that he could be the one to fix him. Harry believes that Voldemort is responsible for the power and skill that he possesses. Harry is grateful only to Voldemort. This way Voldemort has ensured that Harry will never intentionally harm him. I believe that while Harry was severely mistreated for the first couple of years, Voldemort started caring for Harry afterwards. I still have to investigate the memories but my guess is that Harry never suffered anymore abuse after he was supposedly 'taken' into Voldemort's care. Evidence around us suggests that while pretending to care for Harry, Voldemort found himself beginning to care for Harry genuinely. I don't think he would stand for Harry getting hurt now, as much as any of you would. So that at least gives us some reassurance that Harry is 'safe' with Voldemort for now."

James didn't believe Dumbledore. Anyone who could carry out such acts of violence to a defenceless child, can't possibly care for them afterwards. And this was Voldemort they were talking about. He was a heartless monster, incapable of feeling anything close to love.

James felt the rage build in him once again. Voldemort had made Harry believe that he had abusive parents and then stepped in to show himself as the great hero, the one wizard who 'saved Harry'.

"How are we going to get Harry to believe the truth?" Sirius asked, as James was not able to open his mouth, due to the rage he was feeling.

"I don't know how or even if it is possible to show Harry that these memories are not what they seem. Since they are not modified, it is difficult to prove them as false." Dumbledore replied.

"So you're saying that all hope is lost?" James asked, unable to keep quiet any longer. "Because if you are then that's fine! You can give up on Harry, but I'm not going too. He's my son and I'm going to make sure he learns the truth about his family, that he finds out that he was betrayed! I'm not going to be able to live, knowing what Harry thinks I did to him when he was a child. I may not be a very good parent, since I obviously failed in helping Harry, but I'm not the monster Harry believes I am! So I'm not going to rest until I make Harry see the truth!"

"James, I would never give up on anyone, and this is Harry we are talking about. I am only stating the facts about the memories stored in this pensive. I happen to believe that Harry is not at all what he seems." Dumbledore said, with a small twinkle in his eyes.

"What do you mean?" asked Sirius.

"Well, Harry's pensive was transfigured into a ring. This ring was not something Harry created when he came to Hogwarts. Harry had this ring, *before* he came to Hogwarts. The memories stored in here are not all about his childhood with the so called Potters. I have sensed that there are many, many more memories in here that Harry has kept secret. But who would he want to hide these memories from? Why remove them from your mind? It is my guess that Harry is keeping some memories from Voldemort."

At the Headmaster's words, the three adults began disagreeing with him. Harry was loyal to Voldemort. He would never do anything that would result in hiding memories from Voldemort, would he?

The truth was that no one knew exactly what the relationship was like between Harry and Lord Voldemort. No one had asked Harry and Harry was surely not going to volunteer the information. Dumbledore explained that the pensive was indicating that there were over one hundred memories stored in it, but there were only thirty or forty memories available to view. This meant that Harry had put some strong enchantments to lock away certain memories. Who was Harry hiding these memories from? And why? This was what Dumbledore was going to try and figure out.

“What do we do now?” Lily asked quietly.

“I am afraid that the consequences of tonight’s actions are going to be very difficult to deal with. The Minister will be arriving any time. I will have to talk things over with him, but I fear that he will not listen to anything we say. He will want to take over.” Dumbledore said sadly.

James looked up at Dumbledore in shock. He had completely forgotten the deal between Dumbledore and the Minister. Now that Harry had escaped and returned back to Lord Voldemort, the deal was over. The Minister would order the Dementors Kiss to Harry, if Harry was ever captured again. James looked at Sirius sadly and saw that Sirius had come to the same conclusion as James had.

They had lost Harry. Every Auror out there was going to be looking for him and now they knew exactly what he looked like. The silver mask won’t help Harry either. Voldemort wouldn’t be able to keep Harry safe forever. Unless James got to Harry first, Harry was going to be sent to Azkaban or be taken by the Dementors upon capture.

xxx

Harry felt his feet hit the ground and he knew instantly that he was home. The scent in the air was so welcoming. He felt Bella stand close to him. They had apparated just outside the gates to Riddle Manor. Harry looked up at his home that he had sorely missed. Even in the darkness, the castle looked so inviting. Harry heard the numerous pops sounding in the darkness and knew that the Death Eaters had returned. He was glad that the Death Eaters hadn’t stuck around for too long. They had helped Harry escape, that was the mission completed.

Harry began walking up towards the castle. The Death Eaters rejoicing loudly at their success. Victory was theirs. They had managed to walk onto the grounds of Hogwarts and take back their Dark Prince, right in front of Dumbledore and all his men. Their master was surely going to be pleased with them. Bella and Lucius walked along side Harry. They were the only ones who remained silent as they walked along with him.

Harry entered the main hall and the Death Eaters that were stationed inside the Manor began joining in with the loud cheering sounds. Harry ignored all of them. At this moment, all Harry wanted was to see his father again. He had missed him terribly, but that wasn't the reason that he wanted to meet him. Harry had failed. He had not managed to take his revenge against James Potter. He had allowed himself to be captured. He had spent the last four months in the company of Dumbledore and he had not managed to cause any lasting damage to him or Hogwarts.

Harry walked towards the doors leading to his father's chambers. Before Harry had gotten near enough to knock on the doors, the great oak doors opened and Harry saw Lord Voldemort standing in the middle of the grand chamber. Harry's heart was thumping against his rib cage. It gave another painful lurch as his eyes met with his father's ruby red ones. Harry continued walking towards his father. The Death Eaters followed Harry into their master's chamber. They had all quietened down.

Harry stood a few paces away from his father and let his eyes trail to the ground. The Death Eaters that had followed Harry inside, had all dropped to their knees, heads bowed, waiting for their master's command to rise.

Lord Voldemort walked towards Harry. He took in all the details about the exhausted boy standing before him. Lord Voldemort stood in front of Harry. The boy seemed to be having trouble making eye contact with him. Voldemort placed his bony hands on Harry's shoulders making him look up at him. Their eyes seemed to lock into one another and Harry poured all his emotions into his father's mind. Lord Voldemort stood back and let the influx of emotions come from Harry.

He could see that Harry was emotionally drained. The boy had been through a lot.

Voldemort wanted to talk to Harry, to find out what Dumbledore had said to him, how they had tried to convert Harry to the Light, but he could also see how tired Harry was. The one emotion that Lord Voldemort felt stronger than ever in Harry, was loyalty towards himself. Voldemort felt a huge weight come away from him. He had hoped that Harry had stayed strong and not let Dumbledore manipulate him into joining with the Light. Thankfully Harry didn't let that happen.

Lord Voldemort looked into Harry's emerald green eyes and smiled at him.

"Welcome back, Harry."

Harry seemed to be waiting for that as his tired face broke into a smile and he looked gratefully at his father. Lord Voldemort ordered all the Death Eaters to leave, even Bella and Lucius.

Once it was only the two of them left in the chamber, he spoke.

"Harry, I know that you are tired beyond belief, but we have much to discuss. I will ask only one question and then you can retire to your room for the night, agreed?"

Harry looked like he was struggling to keep himself standing upright but he answered at once.

"Yes, Father."

"Did Dumbledore try and enter your mind?"

This was the most important thing, since Lord Voldemort knew that Harry's Occlumency skills were not as strong as they should be, especially when faced with a master Legimens, such as Dumbledore. If Dumbledore had managed to break into Harry's mind, Lord Voldemort would suffer immensely. His location, plans for the war, his weapons, everything would be exposed.

Harry smiled back at his father.

“He did try, yes, but never succeeded. I think he wasn’t trying hard enough, since he was under the impression that I would betray you and volunteer all the information.”

Voldemort felt relief wash over him. He felt the familiar sensation of pride as Harry spoke. The child’s voice alone helped Lord Voldemort to calm down.

“He is a fool to think my child would ever turn against me.” Voldemort stated as he gently squeezed Harry’s shoulders, to reassure him the Voldemort had full trust in Harry’s loyalties.

Harry lowered his gaze and fought hard to keep his voice steady as he spoke again.

“I’m sorry father, but I have failed you.” Harry whispered.

“Failed me? How?” Lord Voldemort felt the sting of dread creep into his chest.

“I...I couldn’t kill Potter. I had the chance and I lost it. I don’t know what to say.”

Harry wished he had just performed the killing curse on James Potter, but Harry’s reluctance at using the Unforgivables, had caused Harry to fail again.

Lord Voldemort sighed with relief. It didn’t matter if Harry didn’t kill Potter. All of them were going to die soon enough.

“It doesn’t matter for now. Maybe it is for the best that you didn’t kill him. I would want to be there, to watch my son take his revenge. You will have your revenge, Harry. I promise you that.”

Harry looked up at his father with relief. He had been so scared about disappointing his father, but Lord Voldemort cast away all Harry’s fears as he reassured him.

Chapter Thirty

Dumbledore was in serious trouble. Not only was he getting angry mail from concerned parents, wanting to know how Death Eaters had managed to come onto Hogwarts grounds but he was in a lot of trouble from the Ministry as well.

Soon after James, Lily and Sirius had left Dumbledore's office, that night of Harry's escape, the Minister for Magic arrived by Floo. Cornelius Fudge was not someone who intimidated a lot of men and certainly not Albus Dumbledore. However, Fudge knew that the circumstances that had arisen had meant the Dumbledore was going to be forced to do what the Minister wanted. Fudge told Dumbledore that he had failed in his task of watching over Harry and now the Ministry was going to take over.

No matter what Dumbledore said, or how much he tried to control the situation, Fudge insisted that Dumbledore had his chance with Harry. The boy had been with the Headmaster for the last four months and had managed to escape back to Lord Voldemort. Now Harry was going to be hunted down by the Ministry.

James and Sirius were also told that they were going to be closely monitored, as they were related to Harry and therefore could not be trusted with Harry's capture. The orders given to all the Aurors were clear, Find the Dark Prince and administer the Dementor's Kiss upon capture. There was going to be no trial, no chance given for a possible escape. Fudge knew that with the Dark Prince caught and punished, he would easily win back the wizarding world's trust. With the recent attacks increasing day by day, Fudge really needed to show that he had some things under control.

James and Sirius found that they couldn't do anything without being monitored by Aurors. Not only did this insult their status as high ranking Aurors, but it made them feel like criminals themselves. There was no doubt about it though, if James and Sirius did catch Harry, they would never hand him over to the Ministry. James had returned to his work as an Auror, as there was no reason for him to remain at Hogwarts now.

Even though Dumbledore tried to explain to everyone in the Order, exactly what Harry had been through, very few people agreed with Dumbledore. Most of the Order members had children of their own, or some family member, who attended Hogwarts. The thought that any one of them could have been attacked or killed by the Death Eater attack was terrifying. With the exception of Professor McGonagall, Professor Snape and the three Marauders, no one else wanted anything to do with the redemption of Harry. Many didn't believe Dumbledore's claim that Harry was in fact the chosen one. As far as they were concerned, Harry was given a chance and he threw that chance away when he willingly returned back to Lord Voldemort. Now the Ministry could deal with him in any way they wanted.

Damien was suffering as well. Most of the school had witnessed the Death Eater attack and were more than surprised to see Harry Potter take Bellatrix Lestrange's hand and willingly disappear away with her. The rumours started spreading that Harry was none other than the Dark Prince, Lord Voldemort's adopted son. As a result, Damien was subjected to much pointing and whispering. He was constantly stopped and asked if the rumour was true and how he felt that his own brother was a murderer. Most of the Gryffindors were horrified that a known murderer had spent so much time with them, it was a miracle that no one was attacked by him. Ron and Hermione tried their best to shelter Damien and protect him from the other students, who seemed determined to make Damien pay for Harry's crimes.

There was one person who had reacted to the news of Harry being the Dark Prince the worst. Neville Longbottom had marched to the Headmaster's office and demanded to know what the truth was. At that moment Damien and Lily had been in conversation with Professor Dumbledore in his office.

"Mr Longbottom? What can I do for you?" Dumbledore had asked as politely as he could.

"Is it true?" Neville asked simply.

Professor Dumbledore lowered his head and took a deep breath.

"Neville, I am so sorry. I should have talked to you about this long before but I was hoping to get through to Harry before..."

“Get through to him! Why? Why would you want to do that? Why was he even here! Since when has it become customary for *murderers* to attend Hogwarts?”

Neville didn't see the flinch in Lily and Damien as Neville had shouted out the word 'murderer'. Neville knew that the Dark Prince was responsible for the death of his parents. He understood that his parents were killed on Voldemorts's orders but it was the Dark Prince who had brutally murdered them.

“He killed my parents! He is loyal to Voldemort, You knew that! You knew and you still made him share a room with me! How could you Professor?” Neville had tears of anger shining in his eyes.

“And you...” Neville shouted at Damien. “You knew as well, and you treated him like he was a normal kid! You made all of us hang out with him! Be nice to him. I thought you were my friend and you just did the worst possible thing to me!”

Damien didn't say anything, he just took the abuse from Neville. After all, Neville had every right to be this upset. He had lost his parents, his entire life had been shattered because of what Harry had done.

“Neville, please don't hold Damien Potter responsible for trying to change Harry. It was on my orders that Damien was spending time with Harry. I was hoping that maybe Harry would change and join the side he belongs in.”

“The only place he belongs in is Azkaban!” Neville said in between clenched teeth.

“Neville, please take a seat, there is a lot I need to explain to you.” Dumbledore gestured to Neville to take a seat.

“I don't need to hear anything you have to say! I'm through with this. I've informed my Gran, she'll be arriving soon. I'm leaving Hogwarts, Professor! After what you did to me, I can't stand to be near you or Hogwarts anymore!” Neville left the office and refused to speak to anyone.

Neville left that afternoon, vowing never to return. Dumbledore was shaken up by Neville's departure and no matter what anyone said, Dumbledore wouldn't stop blaming himself.

The atmosphere was so tense that Damien asked if he could leave Hogwarts and go home early for Christmas. Seeing the attitude most had against the young boy, Dumbledore agreed and Lily and Damien left Hogwarts four days before the official end of school.

xxx

Harry was glad he had come back home. The first night back home, he had slept soundly for the first time in four months. He had, however, dreaded the conversation he knew he had to have, with Lord Voldemort. Harry knew that he was going to have a killer headache as soon as he finished explaining the way he was constantly followed by James Potter and how he was treated by Moody.

It turned out that Harry had only got as far as arriving at Grimmauld place, and almost being forced Veritaserum, and Lord Voldemort had lost his temper. After Harry had a chance to recover from the pounding headache, he continued. When Harry explained about the Bartra Bracelet, he was surprised that his father kept calm. Harry figured that Bella must have already told him about it.

Harry was relieved to tell his father about all the things he had been through at Hogwarts but Harry had learned one thing at a very early age. Never lie to Lord Voldemort but if you 'conveniently forget' to mention something, then that can't be held against you. Well not against Harry anyway. So Harry 'conveniently forgot' to mention the fact that he only duelled the Daywalkers because he was protecting Damien and how much time the young Gryffindor had spent with him.

Harry told Voldemort about the abuse he had to endure at the hands of Moody. Harry was actually embarrassed by the fact that Moody had been able to hurt him. Harry had been trained to duel by Lord Voldemort himself, and Harry was very proud of the fact that he could duel with more than one person at any given time. Lord Voldemort however didn't blame Harry at all. It took all of the Dark Lord's patience to keep his emotions under control. When Harry finished

retelling his experiences, he could only feel a small burning pain in his scar, it was uncomfortable but bearable. Lord Voldemort got up and called in his Death Eaters. He only gave one command.

“Bring me Alastor Moody!”

xxx

Harry had just come out of his private bathroom, when he saw that someone was waiting for him in his room.

“Bella?” Harry asked as he saw the dark figure standing near the window. Bella turned around to face Harry.

Harry’s dark locks were wet from his shower and were falling over his eyes. He looked a lot better than he had the night he had returned home. His emerald green eyes had begun to shine again and his pale complexion cleared up so he had the healthy glow of a sixteen year old again.

“So? How did the discussion with the Dark Lord go?” Bella asked as she came towards Harry’s bed and sat down on it.

Harry smiled and sat down across from her. Bella was never one to control her curiosity. She hated it when Harry and Voldemort spoke about something in private.

“What do you think?” Harry asked, as he slipped under the covers.

“Well it depends, how many times did you collapse?” Bella asked as she gave Harry a cheeky grin. She knew that Harry had a rough time at Hogwarts and could only imagine how angry Lord Voldemort would be after hearing about it.

Harry laughed and gave Bella an odd smirk before replying.

“Actually, father managed to keep his temper in check. If only he had done that while I was at Hogwarts. I collapsed more times than I care to remember.” Harry replied and he ran a finger over his scar as he remembered how much it had hurt in the last four months.

Bella looked as if someone had slapped her across the face.

"Your scar hurt while you were at Hogwarts?" she asked in a terrified voice.

"Yeah, and it always happened at the worst possible time." Harry replied, remembering the Quidditch match against Hufflepuff.

"But Harry, how is that possible? Your scar only hurts like that when you're physically near the Dark Lord. No matter how angry Lord Voldemort got, it shouldn't have affected you so much." Bella was really shocked by Harry's revelation.

Harry shrugged his shoulders and settled back in his bed.

"I don't know why it happened, I'll just be happy as long it never happens again." Bella was looking at Harry with concern. Harry rolled his eyes at the expression on Bella's face. "Snap out of it! I'm fine, if you start looking at me like that, I'll throw you out of my room."

Bella looked surprised but recovered quickly.

"What good will that do? I'll just come back into your room." Bella said as an inanely big smile brightened her face.

Harry felt a stab of pain in his heart at Bella's words. She had inadvertently reminded Harry of Damien. When Harry had first met him, back at the Order's headquarters, Harry had been so annoyed by Damien, he had thrown him out of the room. Harry was even more annoyed when Damien had come back into the room a second later, smiling like an idiot. Harry wasn't sure why, but he missed Damien. The boy had become a regular person in Harry's life. He had spent a lot of time in Damien's company, so much that now, Harry almost felt lonely without him. Harry mentally shook these thoughts away from himself. He couldn't think like that.

"I'm fine now, there's no reason to get all worked up about it. Father kept his emotions in check today, and I was fine. He probably didn't hold back any feelings when I was away, and that's why I had suffered. But everything is okay now."

Harry really didn't want to start investigating why his scar hurt so badly. As long as Harry didn't suffer like that again, Harry was happy to ignore it.

Bella looked at Harry again and this time her eyes fell on the silver pendant around Harry's neck. The Horcrux! Of course that could be the reason Harry was feeling the pain so badly.

"Harry, maybe you were suffering so much because of that Horcrux around your neck."

Harry's hand automatically shot up towards the silver pendant, resting on his chest. Harry was careful to hide the Horcrux, under his clothes, while at Hogwarts. The only time it was visible, was when the four Gryffindors had come to help Harry with his Daywalker bite. Harry was topless at that time, and so the four teens had seen the pendant. No one had made any comments about it though, they were either too busy staring at his chest or the wound on his shoulder.

Now that Harry thought about it, it made perfect sense. The silver pendant held a part of Voldemort's soul. So when his father lost his temper, Harry felt the effect as if he were physically near him because in a way he was near his father. He was wearing the Horcrux containing a piece of his father's soul, around his neck. So that was why Harry had such severe reactions. Since Voldemort didn't know that Harry was being affected so badly, he didn't suppress any emotions. However, now that Harry had returned, Lord Voldemort was holding back his emotions, so Harry was more comfortable.

"Maybe, it does make sense though." Harry said as he looked at Bella.

Bella and Harry continued to talk some more until Harry could hardly keep his eyes open. Bella took her leave and left Harry to his sleep. As Harry drifted off to a peaceful sleep, he couldn't stop himself wondering how Damien was coping with Harry's absence.

xxx

Christmas came and with it came more heartbreak for the Potters. They had assumed that Harry was going to be coming home to

Godric's Hollow. They had made preparations for Harry's return home, but now the three Potters came back to the empty house, without Harry. Damien had come home earlier than the rest of Hogwarts and was certainly not in any mood to celebrate Christmas.

Christmas day went by and with the exception of Sirius, Remus and the Weasleys, no one else spoke to the Potters. Damien stayed in his room and didn't come out until dinner time. Ron and Ginny went into Damien's room and kept him company. All in all it was the Potters worst Christmas.

A few days after Christmas, the Potters were visited by Dumbledore. This was a strange occurrence since the Headmaster rarely visited anyone's home. James and Lily were even more surprised when Dumbledore took out the shrunken form of Harry's Pensive.

"Dumbledore, if this is going to be more horrific memories, then I don't want to see them." James said as he eyed the silvery substance swirl around the black pensive.

"Actually James, what I want to show you is something which may be disturbing but proves a great assumption of mine." Dumbledore replied. Lily and James positioned themselves beside the pensive. They were actually glad that Sirius had Damien occupied with a game of Quidditch.

Both parents leaned over the silvery substance and felt the uncomfortable feeling of being sucked into something. When James and Lily hit the ground they nearly lost their balance but James managed to keep himself and Lily upright. They looked around at their surroundings.

They seemed to be in some sort of huge castle. It was huge, with black walls and ornate furnishings. They were inside a massive room. It had a bed, big enough for four people to sleep in, in the corner and a huge eight door wardrobe. It was furnished with very expensive looking furniture and seemed to have an en suite as well which was as big as the Potters living room. James and Lily looked at each other in amazement. They had never seen anything quite as luxurious as this.

Just as they were beginning to wonder where Harry was, the already open door leading to the en suite opened further and a small boy with messy black hair stepped out. James and Lily looked at the boy in amazement. Harry's hair was still as messy as ever, but his bright emerald eyes were no longer hidden behind the black glasses. James remembered the conversation between himself and Harry, the first day Harry had attended classes at Hogwarts. James had asked whether Harry wore glasses or not and Harry had completely lost his temper.

'You want to know Potter, fine let me tell you. My **father** fixed my poor vision. Now I don't need anything for my vision. My father perfected it for me!'

At that time James hadn't understood why Harry had lost his temper like that, but after learning how Harry had grown up, believing the lies told by Voldemort, James understood Harry's aggression.

James and Lily watched as the young child walked to his eight door wardrobe and opened it, looking for some shoes to wear. Harry looked around the age of six or seven. James couldn't be certain. He looked a lot healthier than the last memory of him. His face was fuller and his skin glowed with health. Harry put on some shoes and grabbed his black cloak and stepped out of the room. James and Lily ran out after Harry. He walked around the long hallways and down the stairs with much ease. It was apparent that Harry was used to this place now. He was walking quietly, not making much noise at all. His young face was wearing a thoughtful expression as he walked along the darkened corridors.

Just as Harry was about to turn the corner to go out of the huge brown oak doors, there was a loud scream heard in the opposite direction. Harry stopped in his tracks and listened hard. James and Lily also felt their hearts stop as they heard the scream. It sounded like a child's voice. At once Harry took off towards the sound. He walked along the corridor and stood in front of a large portrait of a huge, vicious looking snake. Harry hissed something and the portrait opened up easily. James and Lily felt a shiver run down their spine as they heard their child speak in Parseltongue. It was not only

unnerving to hear someone hissing like that but also very creepy to hear a child speak in the tongue of snakes.

The two worried parents followed Harry down a secret passageway and they soon arrived into a small square room. It was very small and it only had two torches giving the source of light. Harry quickly hid behind a stack of boxes, which seem to be rotting away. James and Lily watched as there were a number of people standing towards the end of the room. They were all wearing black robes and had their wands pointing at someone on the ground. James realised where they were. The secret passageway had brought Harry into one of the prison cells in the castle.

Harry was looking terrified as he watched the robed men attack someone on the ground. The horrible screams echoed around the cell and James saw Harry cover his ears and shut his eyes tightly. When one of the robed men stepped away, James and Lily let out a horrified gasp. On the ground, surrounded by the Death Eaters, were two small children. They must have been around the age of ten or maybe twelve years old. They were on the ground, covered in blood and whimpering their pleas to their captives. James had actually stepped forward to help them and only then did he realise that he was unable to do anything. James looked over to see a very pale Harry, watching the entire scene unfold before him.

“Wait till your parents’ find your bloodied forms, then we’ll see if they’ll stand against our Lord!” one of the Death Eaters said.

He was holding something in his hand. Only when he brought the weapon down onto the whimpering children, did James realise what it was. He heard Harry’s’ horrified gasp as the whip tore into the children’s backs. They poor children let out another scream and James felt physically sick. Lily was trembling and she reached out to hold onto James, as she felt she could faint at any time. How could someone do that to young defenceless, innocent children?

However, James and Lily’s reaction was nothing compared to the seven year old Harry’s reaction. He was shaking and seemed to flinch terribly as the whip came down. He was biting his lower lip to hold in his horrified screams. James realised that Harry must have

been horribly reminded of his own abuse as he watched two strangers being punished.

Suddenly Harry's eyes opened and there was flash of green light in his eyes. Harry's eyes seemed to darken for a moment. He pulled out his wand and aimed it at the Death Eater holding the whip. A jet of yellow light came out and hit the Death Eater in the hand. The whip immediately dropped to the ground and the Death Eater howled in pain.

"Nott! What is it? What happened Nott?" the other Death Eaters asked as they tried to see what had attacked the dark haired man.

Nott, was in too much pain as he hopped around on one foot. James looked over to see Harry pointing his wand at another Death Eater. There were four Death Eaters present and were all huddled around the Death Eater named Nott. The jet of red light that came out of Harry's wand had hit the Death Eater nearest to the children. He went down instantly. James knew that Harry was firing 'Stupefy' hexes and the one that he had used first was a stinging hex. For a child of seven to be able to cast these spells so accurately was amazing.

The two Death Eaters remaining started shooting hexes randomly. Harry crouched behind the boxes to save himself. Once he was sure that there were no more curses coming his way Harry peeked around the corner and brought another Death Eater down by stupefying him.

Now there was only one Death Eater and Nott left. Harry crouched over and sent a jelly legs jinx over to the remaining Death Eater. The blond haired man went into a sort of jig type dance and ended up falling over Nott and trapping him. Harry was giggling at the sight and even James and Lily couldn't help but laugh at what Harry had done.

Harry quickly got up and rushed over to the two kids lying on the ground.

"Are you okay?" Harry asked and James felt as if his heart was going to burst with pride. Even by having such a horrible childhood and despite living with Voldemort, Harry had a lot of compassion for others.

Harry helped up the two injured children and got them out of the cell quickly. James and Lily followed Harry as he ran to a room at the end of the corridor. It had a brown wooden door with a brass handle in the shape of a house elf. James and Lily didn't get a chance to study the unusual handle as Harry had thrown the door open and had rushed over to a small fireplace. James and Lily saw the size of the fireplace and realised why there was a house elf on the handle. It must be the one used by house elves. Usually house elves didn't leave the house at all, but when they do need to leave for whatever reason, they tend to use their own Floo system as they would probably get lost in the wizard's floo system. This fireplace definitely belonged to the house elves, as it was so small that a fully grown adult would never be able to fit through it. However for a small person, or a young child, it was possible to use the fireplace to floo. The two children were using each other as crutches, as they put their weight onto each other. Both children were boys and were looking fearfully at the door, in case the Death Eaters came looking for them. Harry wordlessly pushed one of the children into the fireplace and pulled open a pot of floo powder, he took a handful of sand like power and threw it into the fire.

"Say the name of your home!" Harry instructed.

The child standing in the green flames looked at Harry in concern.

"Don't worry, this fireplace is special, it will take you wherever you want to go. Now say the name of your home, quickly!" Harry said again.

The child stuttered out the name with difficulty, 'Keroon place' and in a swirl of green flames the child disappeared. The other child did the same but before he disappeared, he called out to Harry.

"Thank you!"

Harry seemed shocked by the thanks and just gestured to the boy to hurry up. In another instant, the second child had disappeared in the green flames also.

Harry looked at the burning green flames and let out a breath. James and Lily wished they could embrace their son, for his incredible act of

bravery. They understood that Harry saved the children because of the torture they were suffering.

Just as Harry left the room, he was hit in the chest by a white light. The seven year old Harry was thrown back, and landed on the ground, in a huddled heap. James saw the angry face of Nott, pointing his wand directly at Harry.

Harry scrambled to his feet and the remaining colour drained from his young face. 'What's going on?' James thought to himself. Surely the Death Eaters wouldn't hurt Harry on purpose. Weren't they afraid of what Lord Voldemort would do to them? Suddenly, James remembered the information from his Order meeting. The Death Eaters only found out about Harry recently. He must have been around fifteen years old when he was introduced to the Death Eaters. Only a few members of Voldemorts inner circle knew of Harry's existence from the beginning.

James felt his heart plummet to his stomach. He felt Lily intake a sharp gasp, as she realised the same thing as James just had. No one knew that Harry was adopted by Lord Voldemort, not even these Death Eaters. Harry was in serious trouble.

"Who are you?" barked a gruff voice, Nott was looking at Harry with pure hatred.

"I'm...I..." Harry seemed to be struggling to answer. His green eyes darted towards the door. He was obviously trying to make a decision, stay and try and talk his way out or make a run for the door.

"How did you get in here?" Nott continued to ask. "It doesn't matter, you won't be leaving!" Nott raised his wand to point at Harry's head.

Harry threw himself to the side, just as a jet of red light came his way. Harry pulled out his own wand, but was too slow for the Death Eater.

"EXPPELLERAMUS" Nott shouted, and Harry's wand came zooming out of his hand.

Harry looked terrified as he stood up.

"You're going to pay for the damage you've caused you little brat!" spat Nott. He looked pointedly at his injured hand.

"You shouldn't have been hurting those children." Harry said, his voice was a little shaky, but the tone was one of authority.

James and Lily looked on in admiration. Harry was in a terrifying position, but he wasn't afraid to stand up for himself. Obviously the damage that had been done by the 'fake' Potters had been rectified by Voldemort. Harry was no longer a frightened, trembling child. He was confident that he was right and wasn't afraid to show it.

"Humph! You think so do you? Well no one cares what you think! You'll be learning your lesson, soon enough." Nott sent a stinging curse at Harry.

It hit Harry in his arm, and Harry instantly hit the ground. He hissed at the pain, but didn't cry out. James and Lily watched helplessly as Nott fired another spell at Harry. This time he was ready and moved out of the way. Suddenly he was attacked by Nott. The skinny man threw down the wand and grabbed Harry by the throat. Harry gagged and tried to get out of the death grip Nott had him in. James could see Harry was struggling to breath, he was thrashing around helplessly. Nott laughed and threw Harry across the room.

The small child gasped desperately, trying to fill his lungs with enough air. Nott was already standing over him, he pointed his wand at Harry and was about to cast the crucio curse when Harry lashed out.

He threw up his foot and caught the Death Eater in the shin. Nott cried out and backed away. Harry didn't waste the opportunity, he shot to his feet and scrambled out of the room. He ran along the corridor, James and Lily running behind him. Just as Harry turned the corner he was faced with a dead end. He turned around and cried out as a fist connected with his face. Harry was knocked against the wall and it took the young boy a moment or two to focus on what had happened. Nott was standing, blocking the way to escape, a look of utter rage on his face.

Harry was looking around him desperately for an escape route.

“You’re not going anywhere!” Nott barked at Harry and brought up his wand.

“Cruc...” again Nott was cut off as Harry hissed something in parseltongue which in turn pulled some sort of trigger that opened a door, from one of the walls. The door sprung open and slammed into Nott.

Harry scrambled through the hole and ran into the room that had appeared. As soon as James and Lily ran into the room, behind Harry they saw that it seemed to be some sort of underground opening to the outside of the castle. Harry ran all the way to the huge door at the end of the underground passageway. Harry tugged hard at the door but it wouldn’t budge. It was a huge door, which could only open by magic, James assumed.

Harry was now nearly in tears. He looked around desperately. He noticed there were a few items in the corner of the passageway, they looked like broken items, he rushed over and pulled out a long brown stick. It was very thin and looked like it would fall to pieces soon. James realised it was a broken broomstick.

Harry swung a leg over it, James shared a look with Lily. Surely there was no way Harry could fly such a worn out broomstick, but James’ jaw dropped as he saw Harry kick off and zoom towards the open door, from which they had entered. James followed and was more than amazed at Harry’s superb flying skills.

‘Merlin, he’s only seven! He’s probably never learned how to fly properly, he’s a natural!’ James thought as he and Lily raced after Harry.

Nott was once again knocked off his feet. He got back up and quickly ran after the flying Harry and began throwing stinging hexes at him. James watched as Harry flew out of the way of the jets of yellow lights. Harry zoomed towards the open doors and was racing along the corridors. The sharp corners were extremely difficult to deal with, when flying at such a speed, but Harry managed to fly around them. He was trying to put as much distance as possible between himself and the Death Eater. Harry was just about to fly out of another door,

leading to the main hallway of the castle, when suddenly the doors slammed closed.

Harry cried out as he smashed into the closed doors and fell to the ground. Harry moaned as he tried to get back up. The way he was holding his arm, it was obvious he had broken a few bones. Lily had tears in her eyes as she rushed towards him. There was nothing that she could do, except watch her son being lifted into the air by Nott. He was using the 'Wingardium Leviosa' spell to levitate Harry off the ground, only to let Harry fall back down, once he was in the air. Harry cried out again and started coughing painfully.

James was gritting his teeth in anger as he saw the foul Death Eater stand over Harry.

"Had enough?" he asked, with a sickly smile on his thin twisted lips.

Harry was gasping for air and couldn't reply.

"I'll take that as a yes!" Nott said as he pointed the wand at Harry's head.

"AVADA KEDA..."

Before Nott could finish saying the killing curse, Harry made one last attempt at escaping. Harry had the broken broomstick in one hand and he swiped it at Nott's legs, managing to knock Nott off his feet.

Harry stumbled to his feet, clenching his teeth at the pain that erupted in his body at the movement. Harry cracked open the door, enough to squeeze through and ran towards the door on the other end.

James and Lily rushed after Harry, praying that someone would come to help Harry as the child looked ready to collapse. Harry was stumbling as he ran towards a set of double oak doors. Harry threw open the doors and collapsed inside. James and Lily froze at the sight of the person who was sitting inside the room.

Lord Voldemort was sitting in a comfortable looking chair, with a stack of paperwork in front of him. Bellatrix Lestrange was sitting in the

ground next to him. They seemed to be going through some sort of attack plan.

Both adults turned around to see who had slammed the doors open like that. Bella had whipped out her wand and was pointing it at the door. James and Lily watched as Lord Voldemort's red eyes widened as he took in Harry's injured form, stumbling into his room. He shot out of his chair and was joined by Bella and both of them rushed towards Harry. Voldemort had reached Harry in a few strides. He picked the hurt boy off from the ground and had him in his arms in no time. James felt so many things as he saw his child in his worst enemy's arms. The anger and rage he felt was accompanied with surprise and shock, at how fatherly he seemed to act. It wasn't an easy sight, to see the world's most evil wizard, look at a child with genuine care.

"Harry! Harry! Who did this? Answer me Harry!" asked Voldemort.

Bella was running her wand over Harry's injured form, her expression was changing from surprise to anger.

"My Lord, we must heal him straight away! He's in pain and has many broken bones."

Lily saw the look of genuine concern in Bella's cold eyes and shivered with uneasiness.

Lord Voldemort conjured a stretcher and laid Harry down onto it. James realised that Harry must still be conscious since this was his memory. Sure enough Harry's emerald eyes seem to focus on Voldemort.

"F-father!"

James felt his heart rip as the word left Harry's mouth.

"Yes Harry?" Lord Voldemort prompted.

"I had to, you, you understand right? They were hurting them, you won't get mad, right?" Harry asked as Bella wiped away the blood on his arm, from the stinging curse.

“Whatever it is you have done Harry, I don’t care about it right now. Tell me who is responsible for your condition.”

“N-Nott!” Harry said weakly, at once Harry brought his hand up to his head, hissing at the pain in his scar.

Voldemort seemed not to notice as he was already heading towards the doors. His red eyes seem to burn as if there truly was a fire burning within them. Just before he left he turned towards Bella and hissed at her.

“Fix him! He better not have one mark left on him! I will not tolerate it!”

Bella seemed to cower in front of her master and quickly tried to assure him that she would take care of Harry.

As Lord Voldemort left the room, the room began to spin and James and Lily found themselves in the same room as before but Harry was no longer lying on a stretcher. He was standing near Voldemort’s desk. Harry looked perfectly healthy, it seemed that Bella had stayed true to her word and had healed Harry, leaving no visible scars. James thought it was a bit rich coming from Voldemort, that Harry should have no scars, as he had given Harry one that seemed to torture the child day and night and would ultimately kill Harry one day.

Lord Voldemort was sitting in his chair and both of them seemed to be in the middle of a conversation.

“You didn’t have to act so foolishly, there are many other ways to handle such a situation!” Voldemort was saying.

Harry was looking at Voldemort with a strange sort of calmness. James and Lily remembered Snape telling all of them at the Order meeting, that Voldemort and his ‘son’ were very close and that Voldemort reacted differently with him.

“There wasn’t time, they were going to kill them.” Harry said quietly. There was no confrontational tone in Harry’s voice but the accusation crept in his voice anyway.

Voldemort sighed and looked intently at Harry.

“Harry, I told you, those children were brought here without my permission. I never ordered them to be captured and tortured like that.”

‘Of course, you probably wanted them killed on the spot!’ James thought mentally to himself.

“I know Father, it’s just hard to deal with something like that.” Harry’s voice dropped a little and James and Lily again felt close to tears. The ‘fake’ memories of the abuse Harry went through really seemed to break Harry. The child stood in front of Voldemort, with his head bowed, a pained expression on his face.

“I understand what you did and why, but you should have come and told me. I would have sorted everything out. I never want you to jeopardise yourself like that again. Why didn’t you just tell the imbecile who you were?” Voldemort asked.

Harry looked up at him, surprised and answered.

“Because you told me not to. You said that I was never to, under any circumstance, disclose my true identity to anyone without your permission.” the young child recited the words as if he had spent much time rehearsing them.

James felt tears prick the corners of his eyes. Harry was only seven years old. He was just a child and these words proved it. He was so innocent and naïve that he didn’t go against his ‘fathers’ words for fear of disappointing him.

Voldemort seemed taken aback and was struggling to answer Harry.

“Well, next time there is a Life and Death situation, I want you to disclose your identity, to save yourself. Okay?”

Harry smiled and nodded his head in agreement.

“However, having said that, I want you to take extra care to keep yourself out of trouble. I hope you understand the need for you to stay hidden?”

Harry only nodded his head in defeat.

“Why can’t you just tell everyone about me?” Harry asked, a little sadly.

It seemed that this question had been asked before, judging from the look of annoyance on Voldemort’s face.

“How many times do I have to explain it? You can’t be discovered until you are old enough and strong enough to defend yourself. There are many people out there that will harm you solely because you are my son. My Death Eaters are foolish enough to let this information slip. You know that I don’t trust them completely. The ones I do trust already know about you.”

Harry seemed to smile, as if this was a private joke.

“Harry, promise me that you’ll never take such a risk again.”

“I promise, father.” Harry seemed to remember something and he leaned closer to Lord Voldemort. “Father, what did you do to Nott?”

Voldemort stared at Harry, looking as if he were seriously debating whether or not he should tell.

“It’s not your concern, I dealt with him.” he answered looking down at the parchment littering his desk.

“Come on father, please tell me. My scar was aching for ages after you left. What did you do? I think I have a right to know, since he tried to kill me and everything.” Harry was pleading like a child would for some sweets.

Lord Voldemort looked at Harry, a twisted smile on his lips. James and Lily didn’t think the monster even knew how to smile!

“Let’s just say that Nott’s lucky he has a child, since he won’t be having any more.”

James and Lily actually gasped out loud. Harry didn’t seem to understand and looked at Voldemort in confusion.

Chapter Thirty One

James didn't know how he managed to survive. He had spent a lot of time in Harry's pensive, watching all of his memories. There were a lot of memories with Harry and Voldemort. In every memory, James could see the relationship between them building stronger.

It made James sick with grief. How were they supposed to bring Harry back and convince him that he was the only one to destroy Voldemort? Harry would never attack Voldemort!

James didn't really care about the prophecy, but what he did care about was Harry's suffering. The pain in his scar had obviously gotten worse as Harry got older. If Harry didn't destroy Voldemort, then the scar would destroy Harry. James and Lily spent a lot of nights, talking about the memories they had witnessed. They watched as Harry grew up, training and learning all the different aspects of magic. They watched Harry learn how to duel with none other than Voldemort himself. Bella taught him charm work, although most of them were dark magic charms and Malfoy had taught him other things. They were a little shocked that Harry was actually friends with the younger Malfoy.

There were some very sweet memories with the two boys getting up to no good. Harry seemed to be living in that huge castle and very rarely did James and Lily see Harry outside. It was possible that all of the memories that Harry had placed in the pensive were of the castle, but still, James was sure that Voldemort never let Harry leave the castle. Whether it was for Harry's security or whether it was because Voldemort didn't want Harry in the real wizarding world, James couldn't tell.

There was one memory in particular that James found very amusing. It was of Harry, around the age of fourteen;

James and Lily watched as a young teenager, Harry, quietly climbed through a window. It was very late at night and the teen was careful not to make any noise. Just as he had climbed through and landed on the marble floor, a light flickered on and Harry was caught looking very surprised. Lucius Malfoy was standing at the door, holding his wand up at Harry.

Harry sighed in relief and continued to brush his robes. He didn't seem at all bothered by the fact that Lucius had obviously caught him in the middle of sneaking in. 'Why was Harry using the window to enter the castle' James thought to himself.

Lucius approached Harry, a look of annoyance and, bizarrely enough, concern on his face.

"Do you have any idea what time it is?" Lucius asked in his quiet voice.

Harry looked at the watch on his wrist and gave Lucius a very sheepish grin.

"Would you believe me if I said, 10pm?"

James could tell, just by the darkness outside, that it was well into the early hours of the day. Lucius looked at Harry blankly, the joke Harry had made was obviously lost on him.

"How could you, Harry?" Lucius asked.

"What? What happened now?" Harry asked with a sigh.

"What happened? You've been away from the manor all night! It is now 4am, and Bella and I have been looking everywhere for you. Where did you go?" Lucius asked. It was clear that he had been very worried.

Harry on the other hand gave Lucius a funny look.

"I just went out" he replied calmly, as he made to walk away from Lucius.

"Oh, just out! Well, I wonder why we didn't check there!" Bella said as she too entered the room where Harry and Lucius were standing.

James and Lily watched with amusement as Harry rolled his eyes at Bella.

“What’s with the two of you today?” Harry asked as a tinge of annoyance crept into his voice.

“Harry, just because the Dark Lord is away from the manor, doesn’t mean that you can stay out all night!” Bella said as she walked over to Harry.

Harry gave Bella a dirty glare before walking away from her.

“I can do as I please” Harry answered as he walked around her, intending to leave.

“Prince, you have to understand. The Dark Lord left us in charge and if anything was to happen to you...” Lucius couldn’t finish the sentence as he seemed to be imagining the horrible death he would suffer at the hands of Lord Voldemort.

Harry stopped walking and turned to look at Lucius.

“You are in charge of the Death Eaters, not me. I answer only to father. So if father asks where I was, I’ll tell him, but I don’t have to tell either you anything. Where I go, what I do is my business!”

James and Lily never expected Harry to speak to two inner circle Death Eaters like that. It became apparent, with more memories that Harry truly didn’t have to answer to anyone, but Voldemort himself.

Where Harry had went that night wasn’t revealed. Many of the following memories had Harry returning home late and no one, not even Lord Voldemort questioned him. It seemed that Harry had been brought up with a lot more independence than James had expected.

xx

Damien had spent a lot of time with Sirius and Remus. Remus had just returned from a mission that Dumbledore had sent him on. The Order was trying to get many werewolves to join the Light side, but although a few had joined, the rest had been lured towards Voldemort.

Remus had been shocked at what had happened in his absence. He had stayed quiet throughout the whole retelling of the incident, by Sirius.

When Sirius had finished, Remus looked up at him.

“So, you managed to get Harry to Hogwarts, forcefully sorted him into Gryffindor, made him share a dorm with Neville Longbottom, forced him to attend classes with a tampered wand, let Moody put a harmful bracelet on him, before allowing Moody to physically hurt Harry and after all that you threatened him with Azkaban! And you’re actually surprised that he ran away?”

Remus knew that what had happened regarding Harry was a sensitive issue, but he was so appalled at everyone’s treatment of Harry, that frankly he was surprised that Harry had stuck around as long as four months.

Remus was extremely consoling towards James and Lily as they explained about the ‘fake’ memories. It was a horrible thing to listen to and Remus was glad he didn’t have to see it all happen.

“I’m surprised Harry didn’t attack you before, I mean he had plenty of chances. He could have killed you both in your sleep” Remus thought aloud.

James remembered Harry saying something similar, just before he threw James over the side of the cliff. James explained that Harry had wanted revenge, he wanted to kill James and frame Sirius for the crime and he was going to spare Lily only because of Damien.

James hated what all of this was doing to Damien. The boy had been so depressed and no matter what anyone said or did, Damien refused to allow anyone to cheer him up. James and Lily kept the fact that Damien was the one to release Harry, a well guarded secret. If anyone found out and informed the Ministry, Damien would get in a lot of trouble. The Ministry was already after one of their sons, James and Lily couldn’t take it if the Ministry got Damien as well for helping Harry to escape.

It was soon time for Damien to return to Hogwarts. James had dropped Lily and Damien off at the train station. James had to go to work and it was Sirius and Moody, along with a group of other Aurors, who were going to escort the students back to Hogwarts. This was a normal arrangement as the terror of Lord Voldemort was such that Aurors were constantly guarding the wizarding community.

Damien got onto the train and was immediately pulled into a hug by Hermione. Damien was released and he looked at the sixteen year old Gryffindor.

“Oh Damy, I’ve been so worried about you. You didn’t reply to any of my letters. Are you okay?” Hermione asked the young teen.

“I’m fine Mione” Damien said emotionlessly, as he walked to a compartment. Ron and Ginny were already sitting inside and seemed to be deep in conversation.

Lily had joined the other adults on the train and was trying to prepare herself for the difficult journey ahead of her. She wasn’t worried about the train journey. That would be over in a couple of hours. It was the journey of facing so many students and teachers and answering all sorts of questions regarding Harry again that was making Lily feel queasy. If only Lily had prepared herself better, for her worst experience was going to happen in a few minutes time, while she was still on Hogwarts Express.

xx

Harry’s insides were bubbling with excitement. Lord Voldemort had called in his Death Eaters. Harry stood on his father’s right hand side, quietly surveying the masked men all on their knees, in front of Lord Voldemort.

Harry himself was standing in front of all the Death Eaters, without his silver mask. This was the first time that so many of his father’s followers had seen Harry properly. Lord Voldemort had explained to Harry that there was no need for the silver mask now, since the Order and the Ministry knew what Harry looked like. It for Harry’s own protection, that Lord Voldemort had made the teen wear that mask, so that he wouldn’t be recognised. However, Dumbledore had made

sure that Harry's face was known by all of the Aurors, whether Ministry or Order. Now it would make no difference if Harry wore a mask or not.

Harry watched as the men stood up to face his father. There were only a few Death Eaters that knew Harry from before. They were the ones that Lord Voldemort had trusted to keep Harry a secret. The others were looking at Harry with a mixture of fear, awe and envy.

Harry had spoken to his father in private, that morning. Harry had requested for Moody not to be brought to them. Moody was a highly trained Auror and it would take too much time and effort to capture him. Harry had asked if they could go to Moody instead.

Lord Voldemort addressed his followers, he gave one simple order.

“Attack the Hogwarts Express”

Harry smiled as he locked eyes with Bella. Revenge was going to be sweet!

xx

Hogwarts express had never been attacked before. The idea of it being targeted was never fully thought about, since the reign of terror that Voldemort had brought usually targeted the adults. Also, there were many pure blooded Witches and Wizards on board that Voldemort needed as the next generation of Death Eaters. So the small number of Aurors present on the train was only for the reassurance of the frantic parents, that their children were going to be transported to Hogwarts safely.

The train ride was going smoothly and the occupants had no idea what was heading their way, especially the four teens sitting inside the last compartment. Ron, Hermione, Ginny and Damien were all discussing what Hogwarts was going to be like, now that the truth about Harry was out and Neville's absence. Damien felt more miserable than ever, but somehow couldn't talk about anything else.

Suddenly the train jerked and stopped, causing the many inhabitants to be thrown violently to the ground. It seemed that the train had been

hauled to a stop. Ron helped Hermione up from the ground as Damien helped Ginny up. Damien went towards the door and pulled it open. There was a lot of commotion going on. There were many students, running up and down the corridor, shouting at the Aurors and asking what was going on. The Aurors looked a bit shocked themselves and just ushered the students back into the compartments. Damien saw his mother's face in the crowd and she shouted to Damien to go back into the compartment and stay there. Damien went back inside and the four teens just sat in the midst of all the shouting and commotion.

It seemed that a tree had fallen onto the tracks and that was why the train had to stop all of a sudden.

"Well, that should be fairly easy to fix. All they need to do is levitate it out of the way" Ron said.

"Ronald, you can't even levitate your broomstick let alone a huge tree!" Ginny said while giving him a swift kick in the leg.

Ron glared at his sister as she giggled at his embarrassment.

"Shut it! I wasn't saying that I could levitate it. I meant that all the Aurors had to do was to levitate it away from the tracks" Ron replied, shooting embarrassed glances at Hermione.

"Well that's probably what they're going to do" Hermione replied, not even looking up from the Daily Prophet.

"They probably don't want to leave the train, since all the Aurors are going to have to walk over to the tree and try and levitate it. It's the only way the spell will be strong enough to lift that huge tree" Ginny said thoughtfully as she peered out of the window.

"Why would the Aurors not want to leave the train?" Ron asked looking confused.

"Because Ronald, they don't want to leave the train, in case we're... you know, attacked or something" Ginny's words died down as she realised what it was she was suggesting.

Damien looked away from her, not really wanting to agree or disagree with her.

“Who’s going to attack the Hogwarts Express?” Ron asked dumbly.

Suddenly the sound of screaming cut through the four teen’s conversation. All four bolted towards the window, to see what had happened.

“Oh damn! Does that answer your question, Ron” Hermione asked, as they saw a swarm of men, dressed in black robes, wearing white masks surround the train.

There were at least forty or fifty of them. There were only ten, maybe twelve Aurors on the train at this moment. The Aurors were horribly outnumbered. Damien’s heart was thumping wildly as he looked at the men approaching the train. He knew that they were in serious trouble. The Aurors would never be able to handle so many Death Eaters.

Damien felt his heart stop when he saw who was leading the Death Eaters towards the train. Harry was walking boldly towards them, leading the many masked Death Eaters towards the terrified students aboard the Hogwarts Express.

xx

Sirius knew that something wasn’t right. When the train had jerked to an abrupt stop, he knew that it wasn’t a coincidence that a tree had fallen onto the tracks. Sirius was the one who had said that the Aurors shouldn’t leave the train just yet. Moody was agreeing with him, while the others were arguing with them. It was only when they all heard the petrified screams of students, looking out of their windows that they realised that they were surrounded by Death Eaters.

Sirius wasted no time and quickly ordered the students away from the windows, the other Aurors were charming the doors and windows shut. Lily was helping the Aurors as much as she could. Lily couldn’t believe who was leading these vicious men towards the train. Harry

was walking in front of the Death Eaters, he was the only one without a mask.

Lily and Sirius looked at each other in blind panic. What were they going to do now? Sirius wouldn't be able to protect the students of Hogwarts and Harry. The other Aurors would try and take down Harry first. Lily gave Sirius a pleading look, since her throat was too constricted by emotions. Sirius gave her a small nod, to signal that he would protect Harry, as much as he possibly could.

Harry stood in front of the trapped train. His men had surrounded the scarlet train and had their wands drawn, ready for the attack. They all had hungry looks in their eyes. Harry turned to look at them. He spoke to the Death Eaters that were standing near him.

"Remember my orders; no one goes into the train. If a student comes out of the train, you merely stun them, understand. If any of you kill a student, I will kill you in return. We are here for the Aurors, particularly Moody. The message we are sending to the wizarding world is that these Aurors can't protect them. True protection lies with father. Understand!"

The Death Eaters around him voiced their understanding and Harry turned around to look at the scarlet train. Harry had already explained the rules for today's attack, back at the Riddle Manor. However, Harry wanted to reiterate the point, since many Death Eaters can get a little, carried away with these attacks. Harry hoped that the students stayed inside the train. That way there would be no chance of any of them getting hurt.

Harry took out his new wand and held it in his hand. His previous wand was still with James Potter. Until Harry got a chance to retrieve it, Harry was going to have to use the new wand his father got for him. He pointed his wand at his throat and muttered 'Sonus'.

"Aurors! There is no point in hiding from us. Come out of the train, or we'll come inside!"

Harry had no intentions of going inside the train. As Harry had explained to the Death Eaters, the children were not their targets. The Aurors were the ones that were going to be attacked. This way the

wizarding world would see that the Aurors provided by the Ministry can't protect themselves, never mind them and their loved ones. Many people would come to father's side, once they knew the protection offered by Lord Voldemort was ten fold greater than the Ministry. But Harry had to threaten the Aurors, or the cowards wouldn't come out of the train.

The door to the train opened and twelve Aurors poured out of the train. Harry's emerald eyes glinted with anticipation as he spotted Moody and Sirius. They knew from their sources that Moody was going to be here, but the fact the Sirius was also present, made Harry's heart leap. He would be able to take both of them down.

Harry hissed his last orders to his men.

"Moody and Black are mine!"

Bella, who was standing closest to Harry, conveyed Harry's message to the rest of the men. The Aurors had no chance of surviving this attack. They were outnumbered 4 to 1. Lily was inside the train, trying desperately to get a message to James. She always carried that two way mirror with her. It used to belong to Sirius and James. When they used to get in trouble at Hogwarts, they would use it to communicate with each other, while in different detentions. Once James became an Auror, he would often be away from her on long assignments. Sirius gave his mirror to Lily so that she could see and talk to James. Lily was looking through her luggage, it had to be here, she would never take the mirror out of her bag.

The students were in a panic and the seventh year students were trying in vain to settle them. Despite the warning that the Aurors had given, many students were pressed up against the windows, trying to see what was happening.

Damien felt sick, how could Harry do something like this! Harry was the Dark Prince, yes, but he said that he didn't hurt children. Damien remembered the first time he had met Harry, Harry had said those exact words, 'I don't hurt kids'. So why was he here now?

Damien was surprised by Harry's actions, but he still didn't want Harry to get hurt. The current situation was torturous on the boy. If

Harry won this duel, the train would be attacked and Merlin knows how many students would be killed. It was possible that even Damien could get seriously hurt in the attack. On the other hand, if by some miracle, the Aurors won, then Harry would most definitely be killed if not captured. His capture would be worse, since the Ministry had already sentenced him to the Dementors kiss. Damien heard the doors to his compartment opening and was more than surprised to see Draco Malfoy standing at the door. Draco looked pointedly at Damien. Ron was the first to speak.

“What are you doing here Malfoy?” he shouted at Draco.

Draco ignored him and spoke to Damien.

“I need to speak to you” he said simply.

Damien noticed that while all the students on the train were panicking and looked positively sick right now, Draco Malfoy didn't seem bothered by the attack in any way. He was standing quite comfortably, his pale face didn't have any hint of worry or concern.

Ron was in the process of shouting at Draco to get lost, when Damien got up and walked towards the Slytherin boy. Ron and the two girls looked at Damien as if he was crazy.

“I'll be right back” Damien assured them.

The two boys walked towards the boys toilets. Damien gave Draco a funny look, and the Slytherin just waved his hand, gesturing for Damien to keep quiet. Draco pulled open the door and saw two first years huddled on the floor, trembling with fear. Draco smirked at them and said,

“You know, when a train is attacked, the first place they check is the toilets”

The two first years screamed in fright and ran out. Damien looked at Draco with incredulity. Draco just shrugged his shoulders and pointed to his Slytherin robes, as if to say ‘what else did you expect of me?’ Damien shook his head and went inside the toilet. Draco followed and locked the door.

“So, Draco! Why did you want to speak to me, and in a toilet no less?”

Damien knew the severity of the situation, but he was caught up in the strangeness of this event.

Draco rolled his eyes and gave Damien a glare.

“I have a message for you” Draco said simply.

Damien’s eyes widened. He knew who the message was from, but he asked anyway.

“From who?”

Draco looked at the young teen with annoyance.

“From your fairy godmother, who do you think?” he snapped.

When Damien didn’t answer, Draco continued.

“From Harry. He said that you were to stay inside the train. Whatever happens, don’t leave the train”

Damien looked at Draco with a glare.

“Stay inside the train! That’s what Harry said, stay inside the train. What do you think that I’m an idiot, Malfoy?”

Draco opened his mouth to answer him when Damien cut him off.

“Why would Harry say that? The train is going to be attacked soon. You saw the Aurors, they’re not going to last very long! If anything, Harry would have said to run and get as far away as possible from the train”

Damien was fuming with anger. Draco was lying to him. He was trying to put Damien and everyone else in danger by telling them to stay on board. Draco smirked at Damien and replied in his cool, calm voice.

“Harry would never tell anyone to run. He’s the type to stay and fight, not very Slytherin, but there you have it.”

Damien was about to argue some more when Draco cut him off.

“Listen Potter! I don’t have all day to stay and talk to you. I gave you Harry’s message, now it’s up to you to listen to him or not. But if Harry’s told you to stay on board then that’s what you should do!”

Draco was about to open the door and walk away when Damien spoke. In a small voice he asked Draco.

“Why? Why stay on the train, Harry and the Death Eaters are going to come inside sooner or later”

Draco turned around and gave Damien a pitiful glance.

“Trust me Potter, if Harry wanted to come onto the train, he would be here by now”

With that said the Slytherin opened the door and left Damien standing alone in the boys toilets.

xx

Harry was looking at the Aurors with a hungry expression. It had been so long, since he duelled with them. His emerald green eyes locked with Sirius Black’s blue ones and Harry thought he saw fear in them. Harry smiled to himself. He should feel fear. After the torture he put Harry through when he was younger, Sirius Black should have a taste of true fear as well. Harry gripped his wand tightly and waited for the Aurors to strike first. Sure enough, Moody stepped forward and gave the signal, at once there were many jets of light flying everywhere. The Death eaters spread out and began duelling fiercely with the Aurors.

Harry was ready for the two jets of red lights that came his way. He brought up his full body shield. The shimmering blue bubble that he was standing in absorbed the ‘stupefy’ spells. Harry brought his shield down and smirked towards the Auror who had sent the two spells his way.

“My turn” Harry hissed as he sent a thundering orange light towards the Auror. The brown haired Auror was hit in the chest and at once he was blasted through the air. The Auror’s body hit the train and he crumbled to the ground.

The students watching this duel, cried out as they saw the Auror smash into the side of the train. The Auror should have died after that crash, but miraculously he was still breathing.

The Aurors were trying their best to block the rain of curses coming in at them from all sides. There were too many of them. Sirius was busy fighting with three Death Eaters at the one time.

Lily was still looking for her blasted mirror. At last she gripped the handle and pulled it out.

“James! James!” she shouted out.

At once James's handsome face appeared in her mirror.

“Lily? What’s wrong?” James asked in alarm as he saw his wife’s tear stained face looking at him.

“We’re under attack, Hogwarts Express is under attack!” Lily shouted out, unable to stop her hammering heart from deafening her.

The colour drained from James's face.

“We’ll be right there, Lils, keep all students on board. Lock all the windows and doors, don’t let the other Aurors leave the train. You have to protect the children”

“James, the Aurors are already outside, they’re duelling with the Death Eaters. There’s around forty or fifty of them!” Lily yelled back.

James cursed and looked directly into Lily's emerald eyes.

"Lily, tell me exactly where you are?"

[illegible]

Damien had just entered the compartment again, when he heard the first spell being fired. Everyone in the train threw themselves onto the ground as the thunderous stray spells hit the side of the train. Damien managed to get to Ron.

“Everyone has to stay inside the train! The Death Eaters are only here for the Aurors” Damien yelled, over the chaotic screaming and shouting.

Ron nodded his head and grabbed Hermione’s hand, both prefects quickly made their way over to the other compartments, to convey this information. Damien and Ginny peeked over the side of the window, at the battle scene in front of them.

The Aurors were definitely finding it hard to control the situation. There was no way they would survive the battle. The Death Eaters were showing them no mercy. Moody had just stunned three Death Eaters and was making his way over to the aid of a fallen Auror when Harry stepped in front of him, blocking his way. Moody looked at the raven haired teen standing in front of him.

“I was right about you! Albus should never have tried to save you. You belonged in Azkaban” Moody spat at him.

Harry smirked at the enraged Auror and raised his wand to point at Moody’s heart.

“There are many things Albus should never have done. One of them was letting you anywhere near me”

Before Moody could react, Harry had thrown a stinging hex at Moody. The Auror was hit straight in the chest and he backed away a few steps, holding his chest in pain. Moody brought up his wand but Harry threw an ‘expellamus’ spell at him, and Moody’s wand came flying towards Harry. Harry caught the wand and looked at Moody with amusement.

“What’s the matter Auror Moody? You can’t fight me when I have my wand. Are you only capable of fighting a sixteen year old when he’s defenceless? Here I’ll make it easier for you.”

Harry threw both wands to the side. Moody looked at Harry with confusion clouding his mismatched eyes. Harry beckoned him over and Moody straightened up. He was looking quite unsure about having a physical fight with the teen, but wasn't going to give up the chance to fight Harry.

Moody rushed over and tried to throw a lame punch at Harry, Harry stepped to the side and laughed as Moody tried to turn around and attack him. Due to the fake leg, it was difficult for the Auror to move as fast as Harry.

The teen took no notice of this and delivered an incredible kick in Moody's stomach. Moody was thrown to the ground by the impact and was gasping for breath. Harry grabbed the Auror from the collar of his robes and pulled him to his feet. Harry threw his head into Moody's face, successfully breaking the Auror's nose.

Moody howled at the pain and tried to steady the flow with one gnarled hand and throw a punch at Harry with his other hand. Harry grabbed the scarred Auror's hand and in one fluid motion snapped his wrist, just like he had snapped Ron's wrist. Moody grabbed at his hand, biting back his cry of pain. Harry let go of the wrist and kicked with his foot again, causing the injured Auror to fall to the ground.

Suddenly Moody summoned his wand and was pointing it at Harry, while still sprawled on the ground. Harry whipped out his other wand and blasted Moody's wand away. Moody screamed out as his hand, that was moments before holding his wand, erupted in boils covering every inch of his hand. Harry brought down his wand on Moody and cast an unknown spell that caused Moody to scream in agony. At first glance it would seem that Harry had cast the Cruiko curse but that wasn't the case. Long, burning welts appeared on Moody's torso, arms and leg. Moody continued to scream in agony. Harry lifted the curse at last and Moody gasped for breath.

Harry pointed his wand at Moody's head.

"I wish we had more time to settle the score, but since I'm pressed for time, this will have to do" Moody wasn't even looking at Harry, he seemed to be on the edge of unconsciousness.

“AVADA KEDAV...” Harry was cut off as something knocked into Harry from behind and caused the teenager to fall to the ground.

Harry whipped around and saw Sirius on the ground next to him. Fury overtook Harry as he glared at the man he hated with every fibre of his being.

“You really have to stop saving the people I want to kill, Black!” Harry spat at him, as he rose to his feet again.

Sirius also stood up, wand pointing at Harry.

“Even if I wanted too, I don’t think I would be able to stop”

Sirius really wished he could grab Harry and portkey out of here. Harry was within their grasp again and Sirius wanted to capture him again, before any other Auror attacked him. Harry had to be taken away from here.

“I guess I made a mistake, I should have gotten rid of you first!” Harry said and in the next instant, Harry was blasting Sirius away from himself.

Damien watched as Harry attacked his uncle Siri. Damien hoped that help was on its way, before the battle between his brother and uncle resulted in someone’s death. Either death would be equally devastating for Damien.

Sirius gingerly got to his feet, only to find Harry blasting him into the air again. At the third strike, Sirius managed to get his shield up. The force of Harry’s spell was so strong that it nearly broke through Sirius’s shield.

Sirius really didn’t want to hurt Harry, but there was no way to get out of this situation, without hurting the teen.

Sirius tried to stun Harry, but the teen deflected the spell easily.

“Harry, please listen to me, I know what you think happened to you when you were a kid. Please let me explain what....” Sirius never got a chance to finish as Harry lashed out and his fist caught Sirius’s face.

Harry's emerald eyes were burning with rage.

"Just when I thought you couldn't stoop any lower, Black. As if your little stunt with pretending to be Bella wasn't bad enough, you actually have the nerve to try and explain why you helped torture me when I was a child!"

Before Sirius could say anything he felt a shooting pain in his leg. Sirius cried out and fell to the ground. He realised that Harry had sent the bone breaking curse at him. Sirius fell to the ground and felt the spell hit him again, this time it was directed towards his wand holding arm. Sirius cried out again as his arm snapped in at least two places.

Through tear filled eyes, Sirius looked up at Harry's fury filled face.

"Harry! please don't...just listen to me" Sirius tried again but was cut off as Harry cast the Crucio curse on him.

Incredible pain filled Sirius's body and he couldn't help the scream that left his mouth. His whole body was filled with unbearable pain. Sirius felt the curse lift away from himself, and was too busy catching his breath to notice why Harry had lifted the curse so quickly. He wearily opened his eyes and he felt his breath hitch in his throat. Damien was standing in front of Harry, using his body to shield Sirius. Harry was still holding his wand but it was facing the ground. Sirius tried to get up, but the pain erupted in his broken body and he was forced to stay on the ground.

"Damien, get back in the train" Harry hissed at Damien. Harry had cut off the Crucio curse because Damien had stepped in front of the fallen form of Sirius.

Damien stood defiantly, he hadn't even taken out his wand. There was no way he would be able to hurt Harry anyway. He saw Harry perform the Crucio curse on Sirius and he completely lost his rational thinking. He ran from the train, before Ron or anyone else could stop him.

"Damien! Get out of the way!" Harry said a little louder this time.

“Harry, please don’t do this! Uncle Siri didn’t do anything. Please stop this” Damien pleaded. He knew that Harry was barely restraining his anger. Damien could see Harry’s knuckles turn white as he gripped his wand tightly.

“Damien, move” Sirius said weakly, he wasn’t sure how much of Damien’s interference Harry was going to tolerate. Sirius couldn’t risk Damien getting hurt.

Suddenly a jet of blue light came at Damien and the young teen was thrown violently away from Sirius. Despite the exploding pain in his body, Sirius managed to sit up. He couldn’t believe that Harry had attacked Damien. Sirius realised an instant later why Harry had blasted Damien away. A jet of green light had exploded exactly at the spot Damien had been standing at a mere second ago. Sirius looked at Harry and saw the rage in his emerald eyes. Harry was pointing his wand towards the Death Eater that had sent the killing curse at Damien. A jet of purple light left Harry’s wand and hit the Death Eater in the chest.

“I said Stupefy only!” Harry roared as he blasted the Death Eater into the air. Harry ran towards the fallen form of Damien.

“Damien!”

Harry grabbed the young boy from the ground and pulled him to his feet. Damien seemed to be a little dazed but otherwise he was unhurt. Harry couldn’t believe Damien had put himself into such danger.

“I told you to stay inside the train! Damn it, Damien, don’t you ever listen!” Harry was shouting at him. If Harry hadn’t noticed the green light zooming towards him, the killing curse would definitely have hit Damien.

Harry grabbed the shocked boy and pulled him towards the train. He blasted the door open, causing the surrounding students to scream in fright. Harry pushed Damien onto the train and ignored the pleas being made by the thirteen year old. Harry closed the door and magically locked it. Damien was instantly pulled into hug by his friends. Damien struggled out of their grips and stumbled to the window. He watched as Harry stormed his way over to Death Eater

Chapter Thirty Two

The Hogwarts Express managed to get to Hogsmeade station, a full five hours later. Most of the students were glad to be in the safety of Hogwarts while others wanted to owl their parents telling them to come and collect them. Damien was the only student who was taken home. He wasn't hurt physically but was emotionally drained since the attack that had taken place had nearly killed him. At first when Harry had blasted Damien away like that, Damien was shocked beyond reason. It was only when he saw the Death Eater being punished and his friend's eye witness accounts later, that he realised that Harry had actually saved his life, again.

From the twelve Aurors, who were on the Hogwarts Express, only five survived. From those five, two were seriously injured. Moody was in a coma type condition and Sirius was recovering from his broken bones and other injuries. Only three Aurors managed to walk away from the attack.

James couldn't believe that the Death Eaters had attacked Hogwarts Express. It became clear that the attack was only meant for the Aurors, but the wizarding world was in chaos at the news. Everyone was causing the Ministry much grief because so many children's lives were put at risk. Minister Fudge seemed to sink lower in depression and wasn't giving any comments on the incident. The Ministry had lost seven Aurors and it was all Dumbledore's fault. He was the one who insisted on giving the Dark Prince another chance, and what did that damn kid do! He led an army of Death Eaters straight to a train full of students. Fudge would deal with Dumbledore later. He had to do something to save his failing status as Minister for Magic!

XX

The attack of Hogwarts Express had not been a success. Lord Voldemort was not very happy at all. He had expected Harry to finish off all of the Aurors. The Ministry had lost seven men, Lord Voldemort only lost two. The fact that one of them was killed by Harry though was somewhat disturbing.

Lord Voldemort had waited until the next day to question Harry about that. When Harry was seated comfortably in the Dark Lord's private

chamber, Lord Voldemort asked why he had killed the Death Eater named Harrison.

"He disobeyed a direct order" Harry replied coolly.

"What order was that Harry?" Lord Voldemort asked in return. The entire incident had been reported to him by Malfoy, but Lord Voldemort wanted to hear the incident from Harry's own mouth.

Harry appeared to be not concerned by the questions, but Lord Voldemort noticed the subtle change in Harry's mood. He was relatively relaxed at the beginning of this discussion and now Harry was getting uncomfortable.

"He attacked a student with the killing curse" Harry replied.

Lord Voldemort observed Harry, through his blood red eyes.

"Is that the true reason for your attack?"

Lord Voldemort was starting to notice his son's obvious discomfort at the question. Harry was trying very hard to seem relaxed but it was obvious he didn't like the direction this conversation was going.

"Does it matter? Harrison disobeyed my direct order. I warned all of the Death Eaters that if they kill any student then I would kill them. Harrison didn't listen to me and therefore paid the consequences"

Lord Voldemort kept his eyes on Harry as he asked his next question.

"This student that Harrison had attacked, did he die?"

Harry looked at his father, shocked at the bizarre question. Why would Lord Voldemort care if a student died or not.

"No, he didn't die" Harry said quietly, trying to keep his heart from thumping loudly in his chest.

"Then why did you kill Harrison? If no student died then why would you feel the need to kill the Death Eater? Unless of course, you wanted to punish the Death Eater for trying to kill a student."

“And if I did, would that that be something you would be discontented with?” Harry asked.

Lord Voldemort looked at Harry closely. He didn't like the accusatory looks Harry was giving him just now.

“Harry, you are going to lead these men in the future. If you are unhappy with them or feel the need to punish them then you can do so. I do not care about Harrison, if he disrespected you, then you have every right to punish him. What I do want to make clear, however, is that I will not tolerate you protecting anyone from the Light side, even if it is a child”

Lord Voldemort let his words sink in. Harry looked on verge to argue, but thought better of it.

“Father, I apologise if you think I was protecting someone from the Light side. I would never protect someone wishing to cause you any sort of harm. The only reason I helped Da...that kid, was because he helped me escape from Hogwarts. I was only repaying my debt to him”

Harry hoped his father would take Harry's word on this. Lord Voldemort seemed to be observing him. After what seemed to be hours, Lord Voldemort finally spoke.

“Now that the debt is repaid, I want you to stay away from him. The identity of this child is not lost on me! I know that he is a Potter and I am only giving you the benefit of doubt this time, that you saved him because he was an innocent and not because he is a Potter!

Harry looked at his father's angry face. His scar was prickling uncomfortably but Harry ignored it.

“Father, I would never...” Harry began, but was cut off by Lord Voldemort.

“I have always respected your decision not to harm children, Harry. I myself would not wish to harm any child unnecessarily, but this is war. We can't pick and choose anymore. If children are thrown into our path, we have no choice but to trample over them”

Harry noticeably flinched and looked uncomfortably at Lord Voldemort.

“You know that I can’t...” Harry began, but was cut off by Lord Voldemort again.

“I know and I understand it Harry, but you have to let go of your childhood. You are not that same child anymore. I made you stronger. You have to start thinking like a warrior and not as an injured child.”

Harry nodded his head glumly and after a few moments left his father's chamber, claiming that he was tired and wanted to rest. Lord Voldemort stood by the window, deep in thought about Harry and his 'saving children thing'.

If Lord Voldemort had known that his plan with Harry's abusive childhood would backfire like this, he would have thought twice before carrying out those attacks on the child. Lord Voldemort had only done those atrocious things to Harry so that he could be secure in the knowledge that Harry would never return to the Potters. Also, he wanted Harry to feel in debt to the Dark Lord. If Harry believed that he would not have survived if it wasn't for Lord Voldemort, then he would never leave his side. Harry would remain loyal to Voldemort, no matter what.

However, Lord Voldemort hadn't counted on Harry developing a growing affinity towards children. Harry had such a deep seated hatred for his 'abusers' that he had sworn to himself that he would never become someone who would be responsible for the pain of a child. Harry had made this clear at the very beginning of his training and Lord Voldemort had no choice but to give in to Harry's pledge.

Lord Voldemort had portrayed himself as someone who was different to the 'abusive' Potters. He told Harry that he didn't hurt children either and that he would keep children out of wars path as much as was possible. Now that Harry was only a year away from coming of age, it was becoming more and more difficult to keep true to Harry's pledge. Harry would have to change, it was the only way he could survive to become the next Dark Lord.

[illegible]

Harry sat in his room, deep in thought. This was not good. Lord Voldemort had never showed such disappointment in him before. Harry knew that protecting Damien, in front of everyone was not a wise move, but he didn't have any other choice. Now that his father had given Harry a direct order to stay away from Damien, Harry couldn't do anything but to stay away from Damien, even if he was in trouble.

Harry rubbed his scar distractedly. It wasn't hurting but was prickling, indicating that his father was still rather annoyed at Harry. Harry sighed and got up. He was going to go and train for a while. It was the only thing that would take his mind away from the current disaster that was his life. Harry went over to his wardrobe and took out his training gear. Harry pulled his robes off and threw them onto the ground. Just before he pulled on his other clothes something caught Harry's eye. He was standing in front of the mirror and the light that was shining into his room had caught the silver horcrux around his neck. Harry stared at the pendant for a minute. His eyes were studying the pendant closely. A plan formed in Harry's mind and the raven haired teen smiled to himself. It was perfect. If his plan worked then Harry would be able to protect Damien without getting caught by anyone.

Harry pulled out his robes and left his training gear in his room. He had to go and put his plan into action.

xx

Damien was brought back home. Everyone was really shaken up about the Hogwarts Express attack. His friends had sent him many owls, asking him if he was okay and when he was coming back to Hogwarts. Damien had replied that he would be back soon. James and Lily hadn't stopped fussing over him, even though there was not a single scratch on him.

At the moment, Sirius was downstairs with James and Lily. Sirius had been released from St Mungo's today and was going to spend a few days with the Potters so that he could recover fully. Damien had been really embarrassed on Harry's behalf. He tried apologising to Sirius

but the dark haired Auror had just pulled Damien into a crushing hug and made him promise never to risk his own life like that again.

It would have been a really nice reunion for Damien, with his parents and his uncle Sirius and uncle Remus but their dinner was completely ruined by a late owl, delivering the preview to the Daily Prophet. It was going to be released tomorrow morning. Professor Dumbledore had sent it claiming that he was given a copy by Minister Fudge.

Lily had opened the scarlet coloured envelope and had cried out in shock. Tears had sprung into her emerald eyes at once. Instantly, James, Sirius and Remus had rushed over, leaving Damien alone at the table.

“What happened?” Remus asked as he reached the distressed woman.

Lily handed the parchment over to him and the three men looked at the extract that was going to be published tomorrow. Damien came over and saw the parchment as well. His hazel eyes opened wide in shock. The parchment held a large picture of Harry and below it was a reward notice claiming that if anyone gave any information on the whereabouts of Harry or any information which led to Harry’s capture then the Ministry would reward them with five thousand Galleons.

Damien couldn’t believe it. The entire wizarding world was going to be hunting Harry now. The four adults had hurried into the living room to discuss this.

“They can’t do this, he’s only sixteen years old, they can’t do this!” Lily was saying hysterically”

James was trying his best to calm her down. The truth was that they could do this. Harry was a huge risk to the Ministry. They had to remove Harry from the wizarding world on way or another. James began making calls to members of the Order while Sirius was trying to contact several Ministry workers to find out exactly what was going on. Remus was left comforting a broken Lily. Damien was standing by himself, lost in his own thoughts. This was bound to happen one day, Harry was only on borrowed time now. One of these days the Daily Prophet would announce Harry’s capture and his sentence of the

Kiss. Damien only snapped out of his thoughts when he felt himself being pulled into a hug by his mum. The teen tried his best not to break down in front of everyone but the emotions were running high. Damien excused himself and ran to his room.

He was sitting on his bed, deep in disturbing thoughts. Five thousand Galleons was a lot of money. Many witches and wizards would happily track Harry down for that sum of money. Damien still had the preview copy in his hand. He had taken it unknowingly. He threw it on the bed next to him and sat with his head in his hands.

xx

Outside Godric's Hollow, a dark figure stood trying to get the courage to walk back into the house that he had left so many years ago. Harry took a deep breath as he walked onto the well kept lawn surrounding Godric's hollow. Harry knew that the house would be protected by wards, but as with most wards, they didn't refuse entry to anyone with the same blood as the occupants inside. Harry was a Potter by blood, so the alarms wouldn't sound if Harry came back into Godric's Hollow. Harry never thought he would set foot in this house again. 'What the hell have you done to me, Damien?' Harry thought as he walked to the side of the cottage. The place was exactly like Harry remembered it. The colour of the outside walls, the well kept lawn with its perfect flowerbeds and even the driveway leading up to the red door was the same. The Potters had changed nothing about their house.

Harry gave an involuntary shudder at the memory of his last night in this hell house. Harry quickly mounted his broom and slowly rose into the air. From his memory of the layout of the cottage, he knew that all of the bedrooms were located on the upper floor. Finding which bedroom belonged to Damien was going to be the problem. Harry slowly, and as discreetly as possible, flew past the first two rooms. He recognised the master bedroom and the guest bedroom. The third bedroom was probably Damien's. Harry flew towards the open window. Sure enough Harry saw the slumped figure of Damien sitting on his bed, head in his hands.

Harry flew next to the window and in one fluid move Harry had grabbed onto the window ledge and had pulled himself into Damien's

room. Harry stood at the window, watching the distressed boy rub at his eyes. 'Merlin, he doesn't even know someone's come into his room!'

Harry was considering attacking the stupid boy, as he was so oblivious to the danger he was putting himself into. Instead Harry walked over to the teen and stood over him.

"You should really lock your window from now on" Harry said as the teen jerked his head up at the sound of his voice.

Harry smiled at the utterly shocked looking Damien. The teen scrambled to his feet and had flung his arms around Harry. Harry pulled the tearful boy away from himself.

"What's with all the hugs?" he asked him jokingly.

"Harry! What...what are you doing here?" Damien was hoping that Harry had come home, but he knew that if that was the case then Harry wouldn't be coming into the house through Damien's window.

"I wanted to make sure you were okay" Harry said and Damien was shocked at the sincerity in his voice. Damien knew that Harry cared for him ever since the Daywalker incident but Harry had never said that he cared for him in such clear words before.

"I'm okay, but you're in real trouble, Harry!" Damien said as he moved away from him and picked up the parchment with the reward notice.

Damien handed the parchment over to Harry. The raven haired teen took the parchment and read the reward notice. Damien was watching his brother for his reaction. To Damien's surprise, Harry smiled at the parchment and threw it carelessly back onto the bed.

"That's it, five thousand Galleons. I thought I was worth more than that!" Harry said with a laugh.

"How could you joke about something like that?" Damien snapped at him.

"Whose joking?" Harry replied with a smile on his face.

“Harry! You don’t seem to understand how bad this is. Every witch and wizard is going to be looking for you now, sooner or later you’ll get caught and then...” Damien couldn’t go on with what punishment was waiting for Harry.

Harry put a comforting hand on the younger boy’s shoulder.

“I told you before, Damy. Don’t worry about me. I’m very good at hiding. No one can find me if I don’t want to be found”

Damien opened his mouth to ask what Harry meant by that, but the emerald eyed teen put a hand up to stop him.

“Damy, I don’t have much time. I came to see if you were okay. I wanted to tell you that the attack on Hogwarts Express wasn’t meant for the students. We were only there for the Aurors. I need you to know that”

Damien nodded his head in response. He already knew that. Malfoy had hinted at that when he made that comment about Harry not coming onto the train.

“I also wanted to give you something” Harry looked a little uncomfortable as he pulled a box out of his robes. Damien looked at the box with an inquisitive expression. Harry handed the box over to Damien.

“What is it?” Damien asked as he took the box from his older brother. Harry gave Damien a funny look.

“Must you ask pointless questions? If I was going to tell you what it was, I wouldn’t have put it inside a box”

Damien smiled at Harry’s reprimand. He quickly opened the box and stared at the item inside. It was breathtaking. Damien took out a silver pendant. It was an oval shaped pendant with a black stone in the middle. It was surrounded by a series of small white stones. Damien could feel the raw power of the black stone as he ran his finger over it.

“Harry! What is this?” Damien asked.

“It” called a ***Lahyoo Jisteen***. It is a very rare stone and the one who has it and keeps it close to them benefits in all sorts of ways.” Harry explained, thoroughly enjoying the look of awe on Damien’s face.

What does it do?” Damien asked as he ran his finger over the black stone again, mesmerised by the beauty of it.

“It protects you from everything you need to be protected from” Harry answered simply.

“But, why are you giving this to me, if anyone needs this more than ever, it’s you” Damien said. It sounded to Damien as if the stone was a good luck charm, type of thing.

Harry laughed and took the pendant from Damien.

“Just consider it a late Christmas gift” Harry said while he slipped the pendant over Damien’s neck. Damien saw the black stone turn to a blood red colour before turning back to the glistening black. “Just promise me that you’ll never take it off. I’ve put all sorts of charms on the pendant so that it can’t be broken or forcibly taken from you. The only person who can remove the necklace is you. I need you to swear to me that you’ll never take this off. Okay” Harry asked in a serious voice.

“I swear, I’ll never take it off” Damien assured him. He looked at the pendant affectionately. It was the first ever gift from his brother. Suddenly a thought occurred to Damien and he looked at Harry a little embarrassedly.

“I didn’t get you anything for Christmas” Damien said in a small voice.

“I was going to! I was planning on getting you a broomstick servicing kit. I planned on buying it when we were in Hogsmeade, but when we went to Hogsmeade, I wasn’t talking to you so I kind of forgot about it. I didn’t get the chance to get you anything after that, you know with you leaving and everything” Damien finished looking sheepishly at Harry.

"I don't need a broomstick servicing kit, you don't have to buy me anything. I do have something you could do for me though, you can consider it my Christmas gift" Harry said.

At Damien's nod, Harry continued.

"My ring. I left it in the Gryffindor dorm room. It's probably still there somewhere. When you go back to Hogwarts, I need you to find it for me. Give it to Malfoy and he'll return it back to me. It's really important that I get that ring back."

Damien could hear the worry clearly in Harry's voice.

"You mean the black and silver ring that I told you to put down, when you were pretending to be uncle Siri?" Damien asked with a raised eyebrow.

Harry actually had the decency to blush at the memory.

"Yeah, that's the one"

Damien smiled at Harry's red face and then decided to come clean.

"It's not in the Gryffindor dorm room. We know that the ring is actually your private pensive"

The colour that had crept into Harry's cheeks suddenly vanished and Harry looked as if he would collapse with shock.

"What!...you...you found the pensive! Who knows about it? What have you seen? Why did you give them the ring?" Harry asked in a towering rage and Damien actually stepped away from him.

"Harry, I've not seen any of your private memories. I didn't give anyone the ring. Uncle Siri was the one who had the ring once it turned into a pensive. Only mum, dad, uncle Siri and Dumbledore know about the pensive"

Harry looked at Damien, a mortified look on his handsome face.

'Dumbledore, Black and both Potters know about my secret memories' Harry thought to himself in distress.

"Anyone else?" Harry asked sarcastically.

"Um...yeah, actually, uncle Remus knows about them too, but he's not seen any of them" Damien added quickly as the look in Harry's eyes was beginning to frighten him.

Harry moved away from Damien and began pacing the floor. Damien had to stop himself from blurting out how much he resembled their father at this moment. Harry was sure his heart was going to burst with fear. They all had seen his memories. His deepest, darkest secrets were in that pensive. Things that even Lord Voldemort didn't know of and must never find out. Harry couldn't bear to think of the consequences. Luckily Harry had locked these particular memories in complicated charms that would take a while to break down. Harry turned to Damien.

"Damien, you must help me get that ring back! Under no circumstances can Dumbledore see the full contents of that pensive. Tell me everything you know about the whereabouts of that pensive"

Damien was looking at the fear in Harry's eyes.

"Harry, whatever can be in those memories that's making you panic like this?"

Harry started pacing the floor again.

"You don't understand! No one knows about what those memories hold, not even father, and if he were to find out...Damy I would be in so much trouble! Father would never forgive me. It would ruin everything"

Damien was at a loss as to why Harry was panicking so much. What could Harry have done that needed to be kept a secret from Lord Voldemort? Damien decided that he would question that later, first he had to calm down his very nervous brother.

“Harry. Calm down. I can get you the ring or pensive, whatever you call it. It’s downstairs. Professor Dumbledore left it with dad yesterday, something about the Ministry wanting to check his office or something like that. You wait here and I’ll go get it”

Harry looked like he would faint with relief. He sat down on Damien’s bed as Damien left the room, carefully closing the door behind him. Damien knew that he shouldn’t return Harry’s ring. After all the memories were helping Dumbledore and his parents understand Harry better but after seeing how worried and panicky Harry got, Damien decided that Harry should have his ring back. After all it wasn’t fair for someone to invade another’s privacy like that.

He knew that his dad had put the pensive in his room. Damien crept into his parent’s room and found the black pensive sitting in the top shelf of the bedroom cupboard. Damien knew that his dad would never put traps on items inside his own house and so took the pensive quickly and crept back to his room.

Harry tried to calm down and take deep breaths. He hadn’t counted on someone realising his ring was a pensive. He had thought that the ring would be discarded and left in the boys’ dorm room. Harry cursed himself for not taking the ring with him. He had planned on going back to the dormitory and retrieving his ring but with James Potter coming back from the accident, Harry had only enough time to escape. Harry got up from the bed and looked around Damien’s room. It was a fairly big room, for the house they were in. Compared to Harry’s room back home, Damien’s room was like a cell. Even Harry’s en suite bathroom was bigger. For a normal home though, Damien’s room was nice enough. Harry was looking at the Quidditch posters on Damien’s walls, when the boy had returned holding Harry’s pensive in his hands. At once Harry let out a breath of relief and went over to Damien.

“Thanks, Damien” Harry said as he took his pensive into his hands. Harry ran his hand over the pensive and it turned back into the black and silver ring. Harry slipped his ring on and looked up at Damien, a much calmer look on his face.

“Harry. What memory do you have in there that made you freak out like that?” Damien asked.

Harry shook his head and looked away from Damien.

“I can’t explain Damy, it’s too complicated.” Harry turned to go back outside.

“Damy, do...do you know what memories Dumbledore and everyone else saw?” Harry asked a fearful expression on his face.

“They saw the ones with your childhood and a few other ones. I heard Professor Dumbledore saying he was trying to break through some sort of charm on the other memories, but as far as I know, he hasn’t been able to do so”

Damien saw the look of relief wash over Harry’s face.

“Okay, that’s fine. Look Damien I have to go now. I want you to know that I can’t come to see you like this. It’s too risky. Just remember your promise and never take that pendant off. Even if it just to show it to someone. Okay?”

Damien nodded his head. Suddenly the thought of Harry’s childhood memories made Damien remember something important.

“Harry! Wait I forgot to tell you something...” before Damien could say anything more he heard his father’s voice calling him from downstairs.

“Damy! Damy, come downstairs”

Damien ran to the door and pulled it open.

“Just a minute, dad!” Damien shouted down.

Damien turned around to look at Harry and found that he was gone. Damien rushed over to the window and saw Harry zooming away on his broomstick. Damien cursed, he wanted to tell Harry about his childhood memories being modified and to tell him about the traitor Wormtail. Harry would know the truth if he could find Wormtail. After

all he was the one who took Harry to Lord Voldemort, maybe Harry would believe him.

[illegible]

Harry was extremely grateful that Damien had accepted the pendant. Harry had got the idea from the horcrux around his own neck. Just the way this horcrux can't be removed by anyone other than Lord Voldemort or Harry, the *Layhoo Jisteen* could only be removed by Damien or Harry. As long as Damien kept that pendant on, no harm could befall him. Most importantly, no Death Eater would be able to get their hands on Damien. That way Damien was safe from all harm and if by chance their paths were to cross again, Harry would not have to come out and blatantly save Damien again.

He was very grateful to Damien for getting the ring back. The thought of his secrets being revealed was terrifying. His childhood memories were not of any concern to Harry. After all it was the Potters who had tormented him so much. It was a good thing that they were reminded of how much they hurt Harry when he was a child. It was the locked away memories that Harry feared, they were locked away for a reason. Lord Voldemort would never forgive Harry if he found out what Harry had done. His father would never understand the reasoning behind Harry's actions. Those memories would have to remain hidden forever.

[illegible]

Chapter Thirty Three

The day after Harry's visit was probably the worst day of Damien's life. It began terribly. His parents and uncle Sirius were still deep in conversation about the reward on Harry's head. Damien sat quietly at the table, he knew that he should have alerted his parents to Harry's visit last night, but Damien was afraid for Harry's safety. His parents wouldn't be able to protect Harry from the Ministry. At least where Harry was right now he was under some sort of protection from the people who were trying to hurt him.

The day got worse when James realised that Harry's pensive was missing. Damien sat quietly as James, Lily and Sirius searched the entire house, tried summoning it and everything else they could think of. Damien hated the guilt of being the one who stole it but he only wanted to give it back to its rightful owner.

After a disastrous morning the afternoon got even worse. James was in a foul mood and had fire called Dumbledore who had instantly come to Godric's Hollow. After many, many spells the pensive was still not found. Damien decided to go outside for a bit. It wasn't just the guilt of what he had done, but the fear of what would happen to him if Dumbledore somehow traced the theft back to him. Damien pulled out his black stoned pendant from underneath his clothes and ran his fingers over the black stone. He immediately felt better,

"I hope this luck charm protects me from mum and dad too"

Damien would have found his own comment funny, if he didn't realise that Harry probably had put some sort of spell on it to protect him against his 'abusive' parents. Damien sighed as he sat down on the stone steps, leading to the back door of the cottage. He couldn't believe Harry had come to see him yesterday. He thought it all had been a dream when he woke up this morning, but the comfortable weight of the pendant around his neck had reassured him that it wasn't a dream. Damien wished he had managed to speak to Harry about Wormtail. Harry probably wouldn't believe Damien, but all that Damien needed to do was plant a small seed of doubt. It would be enough to make Harry search for the truth.

Damien heard his name being called and went inside. His uncle Remus was waiting for him.

“Hey uncle Remy, when did you come over?” Damien asked after giving him a hug.

“Just now, it seems a bit chaotic in here” Remus commented as he took in the surroundings.

Remus had already been told about the missing pensive. Remus noticed Damien’s absence right away and had thought that maybe the poor boy was feeling left out. He had suggested that while James, Lily, Sirius and Dumbledore discussed the missing pensive matter, he should take Damien out for a bit. After all Damien would be staring Hogwarts again in a few days time. When Damien returned back to school he was going to be in a hostile environment. The Hogwarts Express attack would become an excuse for Damien to be bullied mercilessly. That was the true reason Dumbledore had sent Damien home, until the tempers cooled down a little. With this reward notice coming into the Daily Prophet today, it would only become worse for Damien. Things would be tough for him for a while so the kid needed a little treat.

Damien and Remus travelled to the Leaky Cauldron via the Knight Bus. Damien loved that wacky bus. He wondered if Harry had ever travelled by it. ‘Probably not’ he answered his own question. Remus had planned a day in Diagon Alley. That place had everything to keep Damien’s mind occupied. The spent a good three hours in Diagon alley, shopping around for odds and ends, and enjoyed a delicious meal in one of the pubs. Just as Damien was beginning to relax, he heard the petrified screams outside the pub.

Feeling as if his entire body was made out of lead, Damien forced himself to look outside the window. Sure enough there were many men dressed in black robes and white masks, attacking the people in Diagon Alley. Damien felt his arm being pulled and looked up at Remus. His uncle was paler than usual and had his eyes fixed on the men outside.

“Damien! Quickly, come with me”

Damien was pulled to his feet by Remus and both of them headed out the back door. As soon as they stepped outside there was a huge explosion. The pub that they had been sitting in only a few seconds ago had erupted in flames. Remus and Damien were thrown to the ground by the force of the blast. Damien was quickly grabbed by Remus and hauled to his feet.

“We’ve got to make it back to the appartation point! Come on, this way!” Remus shouted over all the chaos.

Damien could only nod his head and ran along with Remus. Damien noticed at once that the raid on Diagon Alley was different to the one on Hogwarts Express. The Death Eaters seemed to be less organised and were firing spells randomly. There was no purpose to the attack other than causing chaos. Damien noticed straight away that Harry was nowhere to be seen, Harry wasn’t with these Death Eaters.

Suddenly two Death Eaters blocked Remus and Damien’s way.

“Well, well, if it isn’t the werewolf and his little cub!” the masked man taunted.

Damien had his wand in his hand but was at a loss as to what spell he should cast. He wasn’t very fast at casting spells and his wand movements were nowhere near as good as they should be in order to duel. Remus was pointing his wand at the two Death Eaters.

“Get out of my way” snarled Remus and instantly brought up a shield to cover himself and Damien, as two curses made their way towards them.

Damien could feel the force of the blast as it hit the shield. He knew that Remus would be able to tackle the Death Eaters, that wasn’t a problem, but keeping Damien safe at the same time was going to be difficult. In his moment of blind panic, Damien completely forgot about the Layhoo Jisteen around his neck.

Remus blocked another curse and threw a disarming spell at one of the Death Eaters, only to have the spell come zooming back at him. Damien tried to cast a disarming spell as well but it caused no effect

whatsoever. Damien cursed under his breath as he dodged another curse 'why couldn't have Harry taught me a thing or two about duelling?' he thought to himself.

Suddenly one of the curses broke through Remus's shield and hit the werewolf directly in the chest. Damien cried out as Remus was thrown violently into the air and was blasted away from him. The teen saw his uncle hit a brick wall and collapse in a heap on the ground. Damien had his wand ready for protecting himself but his mind was running a blank. He couldn't remember anything the Defence against the Dark arts class taught him or anything the Duelling club had practised that would help him today. Damien wasn't going to give up though. He held up his wand and concentrated on conjuring up a shield.

The two Death Eaters laughed and sent a Crucio curse at Damien. With nothing else to protect himself, Damien threw himself out of the way. As soon as he had moved another curse came flying at him. Damien wasn't fast enough to dodge this curse as well and closed his eyes as he prepared to feel the worst pain imaginable. The red light came zooming towards him and just before it made contact with Damien, it hit some sort of barrier and disappeared.

Damien was lying on the ground, utterly shocked at what had happened. The Unforgivable curses were the only ones that couldn't be blocked. Yet somehow the Crucio curse had been stopped from hurting him. The other Death Eater snapped out of his shock and ran towards Damien. He was about to grab the insolent boy and demand how he had managed to cast away an Unforgivable. Just as the Death Eater reached over the fallen boy and extended his arm to grab him, an invisible force slammed into the Death Eater and blasted him away. Damien again looked completely bewildered at how he was being kept from harm. As Damien got to his feet, he felt the pendant touch his chest, underneath his clothes. Damien realised instantly, 'of course the Layhoo Jisteen, that's what's protecting me!'

Damien felt a rush of gratitude towards Harry. That's what he meant by 'protects you from everything you need to be protected from'. Just then Damien felt someone's hand on his shoulder. He spun around to

see Remus's stunned face. He had blood trickling down the side of his face but he seemed to be concentrating on Damien.

“How...how did you do that?” Remus asked.

"I...I don't really know" Damien answered, not wanting to tell anyone about his gift from Harry.

“Come on, we need to get out from here” Remus said while eyeing Damien suspiciously. He would question him about his duelling skills once they got home.

XX

Damien was sitting in front of his parents and headmaster. His two uncles were sitting on either side of him. Damien couldn't help but feel he was going to get interrogated for what happened in Diagon Alley. Sure enough as soon as Remus finished telling what happened to the Death Eaters that attacked Damien, all sorts of questions came flying Damien's way. Damien was sitting quietly, but his mind was working in overdrive. What was he supposed to say? Uncle Remus told everyone that Damien hadn't even uttered one single curse! How was Damien going to explain this without mentioning Harry and the Layhoo Jisteen?

“Damy! Are you even listening to us?” Lily’s voice broke Damien’s thoughts.

“Yeah...yeah I’m listening” Damien replied.

“Well are you going to tell us how you managed to fight off two Death Eaters?” James asked. Contrary to Lily, James was not worried about how Damien fought the two Death Eaters. He was really proud! He wanted to know the details of what Damien had done.

Damien cringed at the enthusiasm in his father's voice. If those damn Death Eaters had cast any other curse, it might have been easier to make something up about how he fought them off. However, the Unforgivables couldn't be blocked, so what was Damien going to say? In addition to that he was under the gaze of Albus Dumbledore.

Damien tried to get his scrambled mind to think of an excuse that would be believable.

“Um...I...I don’t really know what happened. I just concentrated on bringing up a shield, that’s all” Damien was telling the truth. Exactly how the curse didn’t hit him, he didn’t know and he really had been concentrating on bringing up a shield.

“It really is difficult to bring up a mind shield wandlessly, in fact there are only a few people that can do so. Try and think about what happened, carefully” Dumbledore said to Damien, with a hint of distrust in his voice. Dumbledore had been around children most of his life and didn’t have to cast Legimens, to know when a child was attempting to lie or withhold information.

Damien was panicking now, what should he say?

“I think he’s had enough drama for one day, don’t you?” came Sirius’s voice. Damien looked at him gratefully.

“Maybe we should talk about this later, he’s looking really pale right now” Sirius continued.

“Damy, if you want you can take out the memory and we can view it...” James started, but was cut off by a much panicked Damien.

“No! I...I mean, I just...I just want to rest a bit. Maybe what happened will become clearer after I’ve had a chance to calm down”

James and Lily looked at their son, the both could tell something was not right. Damien had been jumpy all morning. After Damien rushed to his room, the adults sat in the living room, trying to figure out what was going on with Damien.

At last Remus came up with an idea.

“Why don’t you see my memory of the attack, maybe there’s something there that you guys can see, that I may have missed”

They all watched the memory of the attack on Diagon Alley. They watched as Remus was blasted away from Damien and the two

Death Eaters. Remus had managed to look up at Damien, just as the crucio curse was sent at Damien. The curse came right at Damien and everyone saw the terrified boy put up his hands to protect himself. No one except for Dumbledore noticed a very faint glow around Damien, just for a moment. This glow had encased Damien and when the curse made contact with this glow, the curse seemed to be absorbed by it. This flicker of glow around Damien was what had protected him. When the second Death Eater came at Damien and tried to grab him, he was blasted away from him. This time there was no glow and suddenly Dumbledore knew exactly what had happened.

As they all pulled out of Remus's memory, Dumbledore asked Lily and James to bring Damien back down at once. The puzzled parents went to fetch Damien while Sirius and Remus asked Dumbledore what was going on. Dumbledore remained silent and stood with his wand held loosely in his hand.

As soon as Damien had entered that room, the boy's headmaster threw a curse at him. No one in the room had a chance to save Damien. Damien cried out in surprise and everyone watched as Dumbledore's curse disappeared once near Damien. Everyone was silent and was staring at Dumbledore with shock.

"What the hell Dumbledore! What do you think you're doing?" thundered an enraged James.

"Proving a point" Dumbledore answered, keeping his eyes on Damien.

The teen paled as understanding crept into his mind. Professor Dumbledore had figured things out.

"I think you should explain what you were thinking by attacking Damien!" Lily said in a much clipped tone.

"My dear Lily, I think it is young Mr Damien Potter here that should do the explaining"

Damien accepted defeat, how long was he going to hide the truth anyway? It was bound to come out, may as well happen now. Damien sat down and tried not to look at his parents.

“Okay, what’s going on?” James asked again, his question was directed at Dumbledore.

“You can’t just come in and start attacking my kid, Dumbledore!” James continued.

Dumbledore smiled at him and looked at Damien.

“Would you like to explain or should I venture a guess at what is going on?” Dumbledore asked his student. Damien looked up at his headmaster and shook his head. It would be better if he did the explaining.

“I...um...I need to tell you guys something” Damien started. He was addressing the whole room, after all his uncles had a right to hear this as well. The adults in the room sat down and looked confusedly at Damien.

“I should have told you this last night, but um...last night, um...H-Harry came to see me” Damien kept his eyes on his lap, that way he didn’t have to see the looks of shock and surprise on everyone’s faces. Even Dumbledore had not expected a visit from Harry. Damien went on with his recount of last night.

“He came in through my window, I was really surprised to see him and everything. He...he said that he came to see if I was alright” Damien choked back the emotions that came with these words. Thankfully everyone, including his parents was silent as Damien spoke.

“He said that he wanted me to know that the attack on Hogwarts Express was not meant for the students, they only wanted to hurt the Aurors. He said that he wanted me to know that he would never attack the students. Then he gave me something” Damien pulled the silver pendant out from under his clothes, with a trembling hand.

Everyone’s eyes were instantly glued to the black stoned pendant.

“Harry told me that this was a...a Layhoo Jisteen stone, and that it brought, like a good luck type of thing. I told him about the reward notice and suggested that he should keep it, since he needs all the

luck in the world to stay safe, but Harry just laughed and told me that the pendant was my Christmas gift” Damien stopped as he took in everyone’s shocked expressions.

Dumbledore was the first one to speak.

“What else did he say about the pendant?”

“He told me never to take it off and that it would protect me from everything I needed to be protected from”

Understanding dawned in everyone’s mind. So that was what had saved Damien from the Death Eaters and that was what Professor Dumbledore was trying to prove. James was trying to fight down the anger he was feeling at Damien. Harry had actually come home, he had been inside Godric’s Hollow and Damien had not informed them. Damien had let Harry walk out of his home, back to the dangers that were awaiting him.

James stood up and walked over to Damien. He felt Lily trying to stop him by taking his hand, but James brushed her away. He towered over Damien, trying to suppress the rage within him, so that he could speak.

“Why did you not tell anyone Harry had come home?” he asked in a quiet voice.

Damien looked up at James unable to answer that simple question.

“Harry had come back home, and you just let him walk back out? Did you not think it would be important to inform your parents? Did that thought not cross your mind? Damien! Answer me!”

Damien looked at his father’s angry face and flinched away from him. Sirius and Remus both had come over and were trying to calm him down.

“Prongs don’t, He’s just a kid. It’s unfair to expect him to know what to do under such circumstances” Remus said while he put a hand on James’s shoulder.

Sirius was trying to calm down Damien.

"It's alright pup, you didn't know what to do. Its okay" he tried to get the trembling boy to relax.

"It's NOT okay!" James thundered. Damien and Sirius both jumped at the sound of James's voice.

"It's not okay for Damien to do something like this! Harry was under the same roof as us last night, for Merlin knows how long, and Damien decides to keep that information to himself"

James continued to shout. Lily was staring at James and Damien, not quite knowing if she should scream at Damien as well or try and comfort her distressed child.

"You could have told us! We would have explained everything to Harry! We would have made him see how he was tricked and betrayed by You-Know-Who! We could have told Harry the truth! We could have had Harry back for good, but no, you didn't think Damien, you just went ahead with whatever crazy thought you had and let Harry walk out of here! "

Damien finally stood up, his face was no longer showing any sort of fear. Instead he looked just as angry as his father.

"And how exactly were you planning to make Harry listen to you? How would you make Harry see the truth! By tying him to a chair again, or maybe locking him up in a room or having another crazy Auror hurt him until Harry gave in! Why should Harry listen to you, dad? What have you done that would make Harry want to trust you?" Damien was breathing hard and had angry tears in his eyes. He knew that he shouldn't speak to his father like that, but Damien was beyond caring right now.

"Damien, I would have done anything necessary to protect Harry, to make sure that he..." James was cut off by the sound of Damien laughing. James looked at his thirteen year old son, laughing sarcastically at James's words.

“Protect? You want to protect Harry! Tell me dad, how do you plan on protecting him when the very people that you work for are after his blood. ‘Five thousand Galleons for the one who helps capture Harry Potter’ that’s what the reward notice said didn’t it? How can you claim to protect Harry to keep him safe when you let Moody hurt him on many occasions?”

James was speechless. Damien had never taken that kind of tone with him before. James wouldn’t admit it until later, but Damien was right. James had let Harry be mistreated while he was under his care.

“At least where Harry is now, he is safe. You-Know-Who won’t let Harry be hurt by anyone” Damien said and didn’t realise the effect his words would have on his parents.

Lily came forward and grabbed Damien from his shoulders.

“How dare you say something like that? How on earth can Harry be safe with a monster like him? He is the one who took Harry away from us. He doesn’t care for Harry, he only cares enough to use him like a soldier. Dady, Harry’s rightful place is with us. He is a member of our family!”

Damien looked at his mum’s emerald eyes and saw the look of pain in them.

“How can Harry be a member of this family mum? He won’t even be given the chance to come back to us. You want to know why I didn’t stop Harry from leaving? It was because I knew that if Harry stayed here he would get arrested by the Ministry. Someone from the Order, like Moody, would rat him out to Minister Fudge. Harry wouldn’t be safe here. I don’t care if Harry lives with us or not. I don’t care if he calls himself a Potter or not. The only thing I care about is whether he survives. I want Harry to live, mum, even if he doesn’t live with us”

Lily had tears running down her cheeks and her heart was breaking at Damien’s words. James was standing a few paces away and was also affected by his son’s emotions.

Suddenly James realised that if Harry was in their house yesterday then the fact that the pensive was missing wasn’t a coincidence.

James felt his diminished anger begin to rise again as he walked over to Damien.

"Damien, did you give Harry his pensive back" James asked.

Damien looked at his father, the answer was in Damien's hazel eyes as he looked defiantly at his dad.

"Yes" Damien replied.

The room went completely silent. Damien was waiting for his parent's reaction. James could hear the blood roaring in his ears. He didn't trust himself so took a few steps away from his youngest son. James couldn't even speak due to the anger pulsing through him.

"Damy?" Lily was the one to speak. She too had let go of Damien's shoulder and had stepped away from him, as if doubting that this boy was truly her son.

"I know that all of you are really mad at me and I'm sorry but it wasn't fair on Harry. You should have seen how freaked out he got when he found out that we knew about the pensive. He completely panicked and begged me to help him find the pensive. He said that if You-Know-Who found out about what memories Harry had stored in them, then he would be really angry with him. Harry actually looked scared! I couldn't help it. I felt really bad for him, so I snuck into your room and I gave him back what was truly his in the first place"

At Damien's words, Dumbledore stood up. He was trying not to get involved with the Potters angry debate, but Damien had just given out some very important facts about Harry and his memories.

"Damien, what else did Harry say about these memories?" Dumbledore asked immediately.

"Nothing else, just that he would get in a lot of trouble if his father were to find out about them" Damien answered.

Dumbledore managed to calm down the two parents and asked Sirius to take Damien into another room for the moment. When Damien and Sirius had left, Dumbledore tried to calm down the broken James and

Lily. After much talk the two parents managed to think rationally again. Sirius and Damien came back inside the living room. James and Lily, although a lot calmer, thanks to Dumbledore, decided that they would refrain from speaking to Damien until things were a bit calmer.

"I understand the anger you have but do not get frustrated with Damien. He is only a child whose primary purpose is to save his brother. Harry has shown an emotion I was hoping he would possess. He risked everything to come and see Damien, to give him such a gift as protection. Harry really does care about his blood, his brother. That in itself was what I was trying to achieve when I took Harry to Hogwarts." Dumbledore stopped to look at the puzzled and saddened faces around him.

"Do any of you know anything about the stone named Layhoo Jisteen?" Dumbledore asked.

When the four adults replied with a 'no' Dumbledore continued with the explanation.

"The Layhoo Jisteen is a very rare stone. There are only three known specimens in the world. Two of these are heavily protected by the Ministry. The third was missing for a number of years and well, I guess we found it tonight. The stone is remarkable in that it can hold an immense amount of power. It can be used for various things, but it has never been used for protection. Many charms can be cast on it so that the wearer will be protected from certain dangers. There was a faint glow around Damien, just for a moment, when he was first attacked. That is how I recognised the influence of the stone. When used for the first time the stone encases the wearer and become bound to him. As long as Damien should wear this pendant, no harm can befall him. If he takes the pendant off he would become susceptible to danger again. If he removes that pendant and gives it to someone else, the protection won't work on them. The pendant will protect Damien and Damien alone."

Damien was listening quietly, his eyes were cast on the ground and he refused to look at his parents, for fear that he may lose his temper again. The four adults continued to discuss the stone and it was quite apparent that the stone had never been used for protection before. It

was basically a stone that not everyone knew about, but possessed the ability to absorb a lot of magic. That is why Damien could be easily protected from Death Eaters. Professor Dumbledore explained that he thought Harry had charmed the stone so that no one bearing the Dark mark can come anywhere near Damien, that is why the Death Eater had been so violently thrown away from Damien. Exactly how Harry had managed to cast such a powerful charm on this stone, Professor Dumbledore didn't know.

"I wish to share something with all of you" Professor Dumbledore continued. Damien lifted his head so that he could see his headmaster.

"I regret that our insight to Harry's childhood is now no longer possible, but I do not blame you, Damien. You were only trying to do what was right by your brother. However, before I passed over the pensive to you, James, I managed to save a few memories. I had only taken those memories out because they were the few that I had managed to unlock from the heavy protection spells placed on them. I had removed them since I was planning on viewing them later. I was not able to do so with the Minister's visit of Hogwarts last night. I have these memories with me and I think it would be beneficial to see what these memories are. There were still many locked memories in that pensive which required additional charms to unlock. My only regret is that we may never know what those memories were."

Damien felt his face burn with shame. He honestly had no idea that things would get so bad. He diverted his eyes from his parents. Damien was ashamed but he would repeat the same action in a heartbeat. He would always help Harry whether his parents or anybody else agreed or not.

"Damien would you like to see these memories?" Dumbledore asked.

Damien whipped his head up in surprise at the headmaster's words.

"Dumbledore, I don't think Damien should see anything that Harry has done..." Lily had started to say, but was cut off by Dumbledore.

“Lily, I think we should let Damien see why we were observing Harry’s memories. Maybe if Damien had understood our purpose, he would not have acted like he did.”

Lily and James both didn’t look too happy about Damien watching Harry’s secret memories. Frankly the thought of Harry hiding these particular memories was plain unnerving. What was it that Harry had done that would result in him hiding these memories? But they understood that Dumbledore was right. If they had involved Damien more maybe he would have thought that they were not invading Harry’s privacy. They were trying to help understand him.

The headmaster, James, Lily, Sirius and Remus stood next to Dumbledore’s pensive. The headmaster motioned to Damien for him to join them. Damien moved slowly over to the group. He felt bad for seeing one of Harry’s private memories, but at the same time he couldn’t help the curiousness overtaking him. Dumbledore took out a vial, holding silvery smoke. He poured the entire contents inside and gestured for James and Lily to go inside first. With a last look at Damien, the Potters went inside the pensive. Sirius and Remus followed and Dumbledore and Damien were the last to follow. As Damien’s feet hit the ground he saw a horrible sight before him. There was large cottage burning in front of him. The flames were licking the corners of the pretty white cottage and the black smoke issuing from the top was engulfing the surrounding air. Damien turned around to see Harry standing with two young children clutching onto him. That was when Damien saw Madame Pomfrey standing with a blonde haired man, presumably her husband. Harry was coughing and gasping for air. His robes were covered in soot and the two children clutching to him were also covered in the black soot.

Madame Pomfrey and her husband grabbed the two crying children from Harry and began kissing them. Harry shook some soot away from himself and stood up. He was watching the scene in front of him. The frantic parents covered their children in kisses. Madame Pomfrey thanked Harry over and over again. Harry seemed to snap out of his thoughts and smiled back at her.

“Forget about it, what happened anyway?” Harry asked as he brushed the last of the soot away from his clothes.

“Death Eaters” Poppy said with disgust and fear.

Harry’s eyes burned with anger and he looked at the two children. A look of pure fury covered his face.

“Don’t worry, they’ll never bother you again” Harry said to the weeping Hogwarts school nurse.

“They kept on saying that I deserve t-this...just because I help children at Hogwarts!” Poppy was saying as she continued to check that her children were not injured.

Harry looked at her again and he seemed to be fighting the rage that was overtaking him. He turned away and picked up his broomstick. Before Harry could mount his broom, Poppy called out to him.

“Excuse me! I didn’t even thank you properly. You saved my children’s lives, I will be forever in debt to you.”

Harry waved his hand and forced a smile on his face.

“Really, there is no need.”

“What is your name?” Poppy asked as her husband came and stood behind her.

“Harry” the raven haired boy answered as he mounted his broom.

“Harry? Harry what?” Poppy’s husband asked, speaking for the first time.

Harry smiled back.

“Just Harry” he replied before kicking off the ground and zooming away from them.

Damien found his surroundings spin around him. When the spinning stopped he found himself standing inside a dark room. It looked like a basement. It was really dark and the only source of light was the few wall mounted torches burning. Damien shared a look with Sirius as

the six people realised they were probably standing inside Lord Voldemort's home.

Harry was standing a few feet away from Damien. His robes were billowing behind him as he stormed into the basement. There were a few Death Eaters sitting in the corner, around a table. They seemed to be drinking and were laughing and bragging about something in very loud voices. Harry's eyes glowed green for a second as he stormed over. With a sweep of his hand, Harry upturned the table the Death Eaters were sitting on. The bottles of fire whiskey went crashing onto the ground. The Death Eaters looked stunned and a few even took out their wands, but when they sighted who was causing the commotion they froze.

Harry growled at one particular Death Eater, who James and Lily recognised as the unfortunate Nott. The three Death Eaters were obviously from the inner circle as Harry was not wearing his silver mask. Harry sent two Death Eaters flying in the air with a sweep of his hand. The one Death Eater remaining was Nott. Harry grabbed him and pinned him to the wall. Harry must have been around the age of fifteen, and he had successfully pinned a grown man to the wall. Nott looked terrified as he looked at Harry.

"How many times are you going to mess up, Nott? I thought I had made myself crystal clear. **YOU DO NOT ATTACK CHILDREN!**" bellowed Harry.

Nott couldn't even nod his head. His ugly face was twisted as he was having trouble breathing. He responded by making a strange gurgling noise. Harry smacked him against the wall again.

"If you can't refrain from hurting children, Nott, then I can easily rectify that!" Harry pulled his wand out and pointed it at him.

"Maybe the loss of limbs will force you to consider your conduct with them!"

Nott gasped and began to struggle against Harry's grasp.

Damien wished he could look away from the scene. He really didn't want to see anyone lose their limbs, even if it was a disgusting, sorry

excuse of a man who got his enjoyment from hurting defenceless children.

At that moment Lucius Malfoy came inside and had pulled Harry away from Nott, who was by now nearly blue in the face due to the lack of air.

The surrounding started spinning again and Damien closed his eyes, as the spinning was making him nauseous.

When Damien opened his eyes a truly bizarre scene greeted him. The thirteen year old was standing in the midst of many people. They seemed to be cheering for someone. There were so many of them! Damien looked to his right and saw his parents and Remus looking equally surprised. It looked like they were in some sort of club or party or something like that. However, that wasn't the bizarre thing. It was the people themselves that were strange. For one thing, they were not wearing wizarding robes. They were all dressed in scruffy muggle clothes. Most were holding funny looking tin cans in their hands and were drinking from them. Damien had never seen anything like that before. The smell in this overcrowded place was making Damien feel sick. It was a mixture of blood and sweat. The noise of shouting, screaming, swearing was making Damien's head pound. Where the hell were they? And why was nothing in this odd place even vaguely familiar? It was as if they weren't even in the wizarding world. That was when understanding hit Damien like a ton of bricks. They weren't in the wizarding world. They were standing in the muggle world. These were muggles!

Damien spun around and saw Dumbledore looking at him. He too had understood where they were standing. He gave Damien a small smile. Damien started looking for Harry. This was his memories so he had to be around here somewhere. Why would Harry come to a place like this? It was full of muggles. 'Oh please tell me he's not going to attack them!' Damien prayed quietly.

Suddenly the crowd that was already making as much noise as possible, erupted in ear splitting cheers as the names of two people were announced. Damien noticed a raised platform in the middle of

this room. It was surrounded by red ropes. It was like an open cage. The names announced were being shouted out by the crowds.

“Go Jason! Go Jason!” some were screaming. But the majority were shouting another name.

“Alex! Alex! Go Alex!”

Damien looked around for Harry. He had to be here somewhere. Why couldn't Damien see him?

Just then Damien saw two boys enter the open cage. Damien felt his heart stop as he saw who one of them was. There, in the middle of this platform, dressed in muggle clothes and looking like he was having the time of his life, stood his brother.

Harry looked a lot older, his hair was messy as usual but he looked taller and his face was much older. He looked around the age of twenty. It was obvious that he had taken an age potion or had applied some sort of glamour charm that made Harry look older. Harry smirked at the other boy who was a good head taller and was much stronger looking than Harry. The blond boy was also looking at Harry with a smirk.

“You go first Jason, you're going to need a head start” Harry said.

“As you wish, Alex!” the blond haired boy replied snidely.

Damien saw the completely shocked looks on his parents and uncles faces. Harry was being cheered like crazy by these muggles. Only, he was known as Alex. As Damien watched with a thumping heart, Harry let the boy, Jason, throw a punch at him. Harry moved out of the way and the crowd went crazy, shouting all sorts of things at Harry.

Harry seemed to pay no attention to the crowd and began fighting fiercely with the boy named Jason. Damien watched as Harry punched the boy in the face before swinging his leg around to kick Jason in the stomach. The fight was over in less than three minutes. Harry had won the ‘match’ and was being cheered very loudly. Harry didn't even seem to notice the crowd as he climbed off the platform

and made his way out. Damien was speechless. He had seen Harry duel with the Daywalkers, but had never thought that this was how Harry had managed to learn that type of fighting.

The silvery mist enveloped them and Damien was surprised to find himself standing in a huge room. He didn't get a chance to look around as the sound of two people arguing grabbed his attention immediately. Damien saw the blond haired Slytherin standing with a thoroughly annoyed looking Harry, arguing very loudly with him.

"Why would you go to a place like that? Have you completely lost your mind?" Draco asked.

"What the hell were you doing looking through my things in the first place, Malfoy?" Harry shouted.

"I didn't know that I was going to find something like that in there!" Draco pointed at the black pensive which was sitting on a huge mahogany desk.

"That's where you've been going at nights, haven't you?" Draco asked as he narrowed his grey eyes at Harry.

Harry looked away and moved towards his pensive.

"You have to stop snooping around in my things, Draco. You never know, one of these days, you might push me too far" Harry's voice was dripping with venom.

"You're not answering my question! You sneak off at nights to meet *muggles*! Why?" Draco asked with a fair amount of anger as well.

"Because I want to and because I can, okay!" Harry answered in a very quiet but deadly voice.

"Harry, do you realise what the Dark Lord will do to you, once he finds out that you're meeting filthy muggles behind his back? Do you **want** to die a horrible and slow death, because that's what will happen to you" Draco actually sounded worried for Harry, which was a weird thing to witness for Damien.

“Draco, I have a good reason to be doing this. Unlike you, I have a purpose for carrying out such acts.”

“Really! Well why don’t you enlighten me, Harry! What possible purpose could you have for dressing up as a muggle and then go duelling with them?” Draco asked, with a slight sneer.

Harry eyed Draco for a moment and then seemed to decide on something.

“Alright, you want to know why I go out to muggle fight clubs. You remember that incident with Nott?” Harry asked as he eyed the blond boy.

“You mean when he attacked you when you were seven?” Draco asked.

“Yeah, well ever since that incident I’ve been thinking about it. I was completely defenceless against Nott! Without my wand, I’m nothing. My power is only there when I have my wand. I can’t protect myself without my wand. Even after I learn wandless magic, there are only so many spells one can perform without a wand. So it got me thinking. If I could learn physical combat then I would be powerful with or without my wand. If it came to it, I would be able to defend myself without a wand. Also, since no other wizard has bothered to learn physical combat, I would have an advantage over them!” Harry was saying all this quietly, but the excitement was there in his voice.

“The only reason I haven’t said anything to father is because I know he would object and he would fear for my safety. You know what muggles did to him when he was in that orphanage, don’t you?”

Draco and Harry both shuddered at the stories that Voldemort must have told them about those awful muggles torturing him.

“But once I learn the physical combat completely, I plan on showing him my new skills. I’ll confess everything! He’ll be mad at first, but afterwards, I think he’ll see how powerful I will have become”

“Harry, you’re just as obsessed with power as my dad” Draco joked. The comment however made Harry’s expression darken.

“Power is everything, Draco. Without power, I was nothing. I was treated worse than an animal because I could not show any signs of being powerful. Father gave me my power and I want it to grow. I never want to be defenceless again!”

Damien watched as Harry’s words brought tears to his parent’s eyes. Harry was obviously referring to the abuse he suffered at the hands of his ‘fake’ parents. Damien never did ask how bad the abuse was. He didn’t really want to know.

“But Harry, that’s all fine...but... I don’t know, *muggles*!” Draco said with a disgusted look.

“I know, it’s really horrible, but they do have some really good fighting techniques. They are filthy creatures though, not as bad as mudbloods. Personally I think you should be a pure blood wizard or a pure blood muggle. This whole mixed blood thing is just disgusting!” Harry said with a scrunched up face.

Damien heard his mum gasp. His parents didn’t know about Harry’s prejudice against muggle borns. Damien had never told them about the incident with Hermione or Ron. He figured it would only hurt his mum who was from a muggle background.

“Anyway, now that I’ve told you, you need to promise me one thing” Harry said as he turned towards his desk, his back towards Draco.

“I know, I know, don’t tell anyone, right?” Draco mumbled.

“Actually, I was going to say, don’t try and remember” with those words Harry turned around and shot an ‘oblivate’ curse on Draco.

The blond boy didn’t even get the chance to react. The curse hit him straight in the chest. Draco looked stunned for a moment before blinking a few times.

“Um, Harry, what...what was I saying?”

Harry smiled and walked over to his best friend, all the while slipping on his black and silver ring.

Chapter Thirty Four

Damien returned back to Hogwarts after a few days. He was actually glad to return back, since the tension at home was becoming unbearable. James and Lily were still annoyed at Damien since he was not showing any remorse in returning the pensive back to Harry. Damien told his friends everything the minute he returned back to school. The three Gryffindors were shocked that Damien had gave Harry back his pensive but they understood the reason why. Ginny and Hermione couldn't stop examining the Layhoo Jisteen. Hermione asked if she could take it, just to get a closer look at the powerful stone.

"Sorry Mione, but Harry said not to take it off, not even for a second. Professor Dumbledore told me to keep it on as well"

Hermione pulled a face but didn't push the matter. As expected by Damien, the school was less than comforting towards him. Many students had seen Damien being escorted back onto the Hogwarts Express and felt that he had been saved only because he was Harry's brother. No one was ready to believe that the Death Eaters would not have come onto the train, if the back up Aurors hadn't arrived. Damien tried not to let the idiotic students bother him, but some of their words cut him deep.

"Hope someone catches that monster before he attacks again" a fourth year Hufflepuff was saying, loud enough for Damien to hear her. Damien ignored her and tried to leave the library.

"Yeah! With a reward on his head, he won't be able to hide much longer" came the reply from another Hufflepuff girl.

"Hope the Aurors make him suffer when they catch him, just like he's made others suffer! The murderous bastard..." the girl didn't get a chance to finish, as Damien, stormed over and slammed his fist onto the table. The two girls shrieked in fright and stared at Damien.

"You both are so pathetic! Wishing ill on someone is just as bad as carrying out an ill act towards them. Just cause you read something in the papers, doesn't make it true! Harry was here for three months, did he ever cause you two any harm? Did he cause anyone any sort

of harm? No, he didn't. He actually risked his neck to save four lives from vampires. You two were the ones who were always following him around and I remember your invites to go to the ball with him, very clearly. So if I were you I'd keep my mouth shut about things you have no clue about!"

With that Damien stormed out of the library, Madame Pince was shocked that someone would cause such a racket in her library, but at hearing the enraged boy's words she had decided to ignore him, on this occasion.

Ginny was having a difficult time keeping her anger at bay as well. She tried really hard to ignore all the comments about Harry but at times she too lost her battle with her rage. She had tried not to get upset, when Harry had left Hogwarts. She had never got any sort of positive reaction from Harry, even though the raven haired boy knew perfectly well how much Ginny liked him. Still, she knew deep down that Harry did care for her. He had saved her life on two occasions and sometimes she would catch him looking at her. Harry was always too quick to look away the instant Ginny looked around, but she knew that Harry liked her. His harsh words hadn't made Ginny stop liking him, but more determined to break his hard outer shell.

Ginny was a good friend to Damien, and so tried to keep her personal feelings and grief of losing Harry away. Damien had lost his brother, he needed the sympathy right now. Many nights were spent by Hermione and Ginny in the girl's dormitory talking about Harry. Ginny would shed a few tears about losing Harry but they would never speak about Harry in front of Ron or Damien, it was too awkward.

Lily was not having an easier time. Many of her sixth and seventh year students had quizzed her on how she felt that she had a murderer as a son. Lily tried hard to ignore these questions, but even the threat of detention, couldn't make the students back off. But Lily was more concerned for Damien. She wished the students would leave Damien alone, and even when Lily was there, the students managed to whisper silent taunts to Damien. Lily was at a loss as to what to do about the students' hostile attitude towards Damien. She

hoped that the situation would calm down, but things were only beginning to get worse.

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Dumbledore gave some bad news on his next Order meeting.

"It is with deep regret that I have to inform you that Hogwarts is going to close"

At these words the members of the Order cried out in protest.

"I am afraid that there is not much anyone can do about this. Minister Fudge has made up his mind" Dumbledore continued in a sad voice.

"But Albus, surely they can't do this! What about the children's future, their education!" Professor McGonagall cried out.

"With the growing fear of Voldemort, it has been decided that Hogwarts is unfit to house so many students. According to the Minister, Hogwarts is no longer safe. Upon inspection to the school it has been pointed out that there are many secret passageways in and out of the school that could easily be used by Death Eaters. The incident regarding the small army of Death Eaters coming onto Hogwarts grounds has not been overlooked by Minister Fudge. He said that if the wards on the grounds could be manipulated, then the wards on the actual school would also be at risk, and he is quite right. Also many parents have requested that their children should be removed from Hogwarts, since it is not safe." Dumbledore explained with a heavy heart.

James and Lily shared a glance. They knew that Harry was the reason that Hogwarts was closing. The attack on Hogwarts Express had really blown things out of the water. Many, many parents had pulled their children out of the school, fearing their safety.

Professor Dumbledore informed the Order that the announcement of the school's closure would be made at the end of that week. Most of the Order left shortly after that. Even Lily left, saying that she had classes in the morning. There was only James, Sirius, Remus and

Dumbledore left. The four wizards sat around the table, discussing what would be the end to something so wonderful.

"Is it permanent?" Sirius asked Dumbledore.

"According to Minister Fudge, this closure is only temporary, until the threat of Voldemort lessens. He is still under the pretence that he has everything under control and that Voldemort will be caught any day now" Dumbledore explained.

"I think we should concentrate on finding Harry, we've waited long enough" Sirius said as the four men got up from the table.

"I've been doing some research and I think I've managed to find some fight clubs that may match the description of the club Harry was at. We should all head over and start checking them out" Remus said.

"Should we head out now?" James asked, as anxiety bubbled within him.

"Why not?" Remus added in.

Just as the four men got to their feet, there was a rustling sound heard. Dumbledore looked towards the window and saw a black owl fly through the open window. There was a large package attached to its leg. James rushed over to take the parcel. The black owl screeched and tried to bite his fingers. James pulled away and spotted Sirius's name on the package.

"I think it's for you mate" James said as Sirius stepped forward. Sirius was puzzled. He never got anything delivered this late at night. He took the parcel and the black owl hooted at him at once and then turned and flew out of the window again.

Sirius saw a black coloured envelope attached to the parcel. He opened the black letter carefully, making sure to check for any traps on the letter. When he decided that the letter was safe, he pulled the parchment out of the black envelope. Sirius hadn't touched the parcel yet.

Sirius frowned as he opened the letter. He looked at Dumbledore with a frown.

"It's...It's actually addressed to you" he told Dumbledore.

Dumbledore took the letter and read it quickly, sure enough the letter was addressed to Albus Dumbledore. As soon as Dumbledore read the letter his already sombre expression became darker. He looked at James, Sirius and Remus with a worried expression. He silently handed the letter to them and sat down. James took the letter and began to read, along with his two friends.

Dear Albus Dumbledore,

You may wonder about why I have decided to write to you. I'm afraid I have no other option left. If you receive this letter then it is safe to assume that I am no longer alive. I trust you would be aware of my death as my colleague has been instructed to meet with you in case I don't make it.

This letter has been written in case my colleague doesn't survive either. I have dated this package and instructed it to be posted to Mr Sirius Black's home exactly six months from today. I had to send it to Mr Black as I could not risk sending this to Hogwarts.

You know me as Jason Riley. I am one of Lord Voldemort's inner circle Death Eaters. I understand if you do not wish to continue reading this letter but I request that you do, since I have information which is priceless to you.

I have found out the secret to Lord Voldemort's success. His plans to become immortal are already put in place. The Dark Lord has created Horcruxes. To my knowledge, he has created seven Horcruxes. One Horcrux is within himself, the other six are inanimate objects. This is why the Dark Lord is impossible to kill. The six Horcruxes will have to be destroyed before the Dark Lord can be successfully attacked.

I know the identity to two of these Horcruxes. I have enclosed my findings and some thoughts on what the other items might be.

You may wonder why I have passed on this information to you, since in this war I am on the opposing side to you. Consider this my chance to get revenge on the one who will most likely cause my death. You are the only one who can stand against the Dark Lord.

I hope you will be able to destroy him.

Jason Riley

James looked up at Dumbledore. He couldn't believe it. Voldemort had created seven Horcruxes. This was terrible news. The defeat of Voldemort was now even more difficult. They would have to figure out what these Horcruxes were. One was Voldemort himself, Riley had given the identity of two of them, but they still needed to find the other four.

James collapsed in the chair next to Dumbledore. Sirius and Remus also sat down, looking really pale. They couldn't say anything to each other. What kind of comfort could they possibly give to one another?

"Do...do you think this is true?" James asked.

"I do think that it is genuine, yes. If I remember correctly, Mr Riley was found murdered in his home. It was exactly one day before we met..."

Professor Dumbledore stopped talking. The memory was still fresh in everyone's mind. Larry Hunt had come to seek protection since the Dark Prince had killed his colleague, Jason Riley. Harry was the one who had killed both of these men. James felt sick. Voldemort had made Harry kill the two men that could have given information on how to destroy him. James could see how this would be amusing to Voldemort. The one destined to kill him was killing on Voldemort's command and he was killing the very people who could give the necessary information leading to Voldemorts demise.

Wordlessly James opened the parcel lying in front of them. Inside was a journal that was obviously kept by Riley. He had a lot of documentation, listing possible Horcruxes.

The four men sat silently as they looked through the paper work. Dumbledore picked up two parchments that had drawing on them.

"I think this is what Riley considered to be definite Horcruxes" Dumbledore said as he held up the two parchments.

One was a simple black book. It had nothing special about it and was going to be impossible to recognise. It was a plain book. There were thousands of plain black books. With nothing to distinguish it, the Order was going to have to burn every black book in the wizarding world, for a chance of destroying this Horcrux. The other drawing was much better. It was of a silver pendant. The pendant was in the shape of a serpent that had two heads on either side of its intertwined body. The eyes of the serpent were a shimmering green colour. James looked at the drawing of this strange pendant. He had the uneasy feeling that he had seen that before.

James reached over and took the parchment and studied it closely. He had definitely seen that shimmering green colour, but where?

Suddenly, James felt his blood run cold. He remembered where he had seen that pendant. James had seen it the day Harry was attacked by Moody. While Harry was lying unconscious in the hospital wing, Madame Pomfrey had removed Harry's shirt to dress the wound on his shoulder. James remembered noticing the strange serpent shaped pendant but as he was too worried about his son's survival at that time, he had ignored it. Voldemort's Horcrux was the pendant that Harry wore around his neck.

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James couldn't believe that Harry had been wearing a Horcrux the entire time he had been at Hogwarts. Harry actually had a piece of Voldemort's soul with him, and he was right underneath Dumbledore and the Ministry's nose and no one had managed to find out. James actually applauded Harry's nerve. He truly wasn't afraid of anyone.

Dumbledore had pointed out that even if they had been informed of the Horcruxes earlier, it would probably not have made any difference. Surely Voldemort would have put some sort of protection spell on it so that it couldn't be forcibly taken from Harry.

At the end of that week, Dumbledore announced the closure of Hogwarts. The result was as expected. Most students, although sad that Hogwarts was going to close, were relieved about returning home to their parents. Some students, like Hermione Granger, were heart broken that they would not be able to complete their magical education. Although assurances were given that Hogwarts would reopen after a short while, everyone had noted that the likelihood of that actually happening was very little.

Damien returned home to his parents and was happy to get away from the hostile environment. Hermione had promised him and Ron that she would make some sort of arrangement with her parents so that she could come over to The Burrow or to Godric's Hollow regularly. That way the four friends could keep in touch and most importantly, continue their studies. Ron and Damien had agreed just to keep Hermione happy.

Dumbledore had decided that the first thing they had to do was to find Harry. Voldemort and his Horcruxes would be dealt with later. Dumbledore made sure that information about the Horcruxes was kept a secret for now. Only James, Sirius and Remus knew about them. The plan was to find Harry, convince him of the truth and then try and keep him safe from the Ministry. Voldemort's Horcruxes would be much easier to find once Harry was with them. Dumbledore was still unsure of exactly how he was going to manage to keep Harry safe, but he was determined not to lose Harry, not again.

So the search for 'Alex' at the muggle night clubs began. The first night, James, Sirius, Remus and Dumbledore left the wizarding world and went to the muggle world they had no success. Finding these muggle fight clubs was proving quite difficult as they were against the muggle law and so were quite difficult to track down. However Remus had managed to find a few of them. It wasn't until the fifth night that they had some success. The four wizards had been careful and had altered their looks so that they didn't look suspicious. James, Sirius and Remus were okay, but Dumbledore had to shorten his beard and hair significantly. The colour of his hair also changed to red.

Sirius entered the fight club and immediately spotted a pretty dark haired woman behind the bar, serving drinks. He quickly walked over

to her and began questioning her. Sirius asked the young woman if she knew an 'Alex' who came to the fight club.

"Alex? Dark hair, green eyes, really hot!" the dark haired woman asked as she smirked at Sirius.

Sirius had to hold back a frown. Harry was his godson, and he couldn't quite get to grips with woman calling him hot. This particular woman was around mid twenties and Harry was only sixteen! Okay, so Harry usually applied some age glamour or whatever it was, but still, in reality he was still only a child.

"Um...yeah, I suppose some may find him...that" Sirius finished awkwardly.

"Yeah, he used to come in here all the time. He hasn't been here for a while though. He's usually with Little John at his club. Last I heard he now only attends Little Johns club" the woman said.

"Little John? Who is that? Where can I find him?" Sirius asked, heart leaping with joy that he had at least found some clue leading to Harry.

The woman shook her head.

"Sorry, I don't know where he is. Little John always moves the premises around. It's always been like that. John senior used to run his club like that. He died only a few months back. So now his son, Little John and his daughter-in-law run the fight club. Alex is a favourite there. He's really quite close to John and his family"

Sirius was at a loss. Why would Harry be friends with a muggle and his family? This mystery about Harry was getting more and more complicated. Harry was not at all what he seemed!

Sirius thanked the woman and left the club. He quickly told the other three wizards about Little John.

"Well, that's a start. All we have to do now is find Little Johns fight club. Something or someone there would lead us to Harry" Remus said with a smile.

James couldn't help but agree. After five exhausting trips to the muggle world, they had found a clue leading them to Harry. The following night it was only James, Remus and Sirius who went to the muggle world, trying to find this Little Johns club. They tried a few more fight clubs but were disappointed with the results. Everyone had said the same thing. They didn't know the location of the club as it always changed around. Apparently this John person was popular with his fight shows and was constantly asked to put up shows by the muggles. James wondered how many fights Harry had done for John. Apparently 'Alex' was also a legend. He was thought to be twenty one, twenty two years old but was a phenomenon. He had never lost a fight. He didn't come that often but when he did, that night was the best for John's business.

James found that knowledge a bit disturbing. Why did Harry do that? He wanted to learn muggle duelling, so he learnt it. Why did he continue to go to these muggle clubs? And why was he so closely associated with this John person? James actually felt a little jealous that Harry would have a better relationship with a muggle who was a complete stranger, than with him.

James was led into the Leaky Caldron by Sirius and Remus. The three men decided to get a quick drink before returning home. As James came inside the owner of the pub called out to him.

"Ah, Mr Potter! Back again so soon! Lovely, Lovely! What can I get you, the same as your last drink?"

James looked confusedly at the pub owner.

"Tom! Have you had too much of your own fire whiskey? The last time I came here was over four months ago!" James laughed at him. It was true. He had arrived by the Knight bus this morning and after their quick drink, they were planning on going home by the Knight bus again.

Tom frowned at James's words.

"Mr Potter, has work been stressful lately? You seem to be losing your mind. I just served you myself, not even twenty minutes ago" Tom said as he surveyed James carefully.

“Well, it wasn’t me” James said tiredly. Tom was the one who was probably stressed out, he must have imagined the whole thing.

“Well if it wasn’t you then it was someone who looked awfully like you!” Tom commented.

At once understanding dawned on the three men. Harry! Tom must have served Harry. It was obvious that Harry couldn’t walk around in the wizarding world without a mask. He must have, somehow changed his appearance so that he looked like James. It was easy enough for Harry. All he had to do was either take an aging potion or apply an aging glamour and change the colour of his eyes.

James tore out of the pub and raced to the wall, hiding Diagon Alley. He quickly punched at the bricks, willing them to open faster. Just as James rushed to the other side of the wall he caught sight of Harry. He was still under the glamour charm and looked exactly like James. He was hurrying towards the dark street of Knockturn Alley. James, Sirius and Remus bolted after Harry. Just as they turned the corner they saw the tiny street crowded with people. James caught sight of Harry walking into another pub. The three men tried to rush through this crowd of witches and wizards but it still took them a few minutes to get to the entrance of the pub.

Once inside James cursed loudly. The pub was overcrowded and it was impossible to make out anyone from the masses of people inside. James’s eyes searched frantically for his son. He saw him standing to the side with another wizard. Harry had taken away the glamour charms so now looked like himself again. James realised that Harry didn’t have to hide his face in this place, as it was full of people that would fear Voldemort’s wrath if they were to hand Harry over to the Ministry. These people worshipped Lord Voldemort, they were less likely to give up their own Dark Prince. James tried to get closer to Harry. He knew that where they were on the moment was most likely protected by anti-apparition wards. James would have to get Harry out from here before attempting to take Harry with him.

James saw Harry exchange some words with this other wizard. After a few minutes Harry pulled up his hood and walked away from other wizard. James was watching Harry closely, refusing to let Harry away

from his eyes. If Harry was lost in the crowd, it would be impossible to find him again. It was as if Harry could tell that someone's eyes were on him, he turned around and his emerald eyes met with James's hazel eyes. Harry bolted from the pub, as quick as a flash, weaving in and out of the crowd. James followed behind him careful to keep his eyes fixed on Harry. Sirius and Remus were behind James.

As soon as Harry left the pub he drew out his wand. Harry wasn't planning on getting caught by these Aurors again. James, Sirius and Remus came running out of the pub. They had drawn out their wands, but hoped that they could get away with only stunning Harry. James ran out into the chilly air and looked around. He couldn't see anyone around here. James cursed as he levelled his wand.

"Point me" he whispered. At once James's wand began to spin and it pointed right in front of him.

James ran towards the direction his wand was pointing at and at once saw Harry rushing towards the edge of the anti-apparation wards.

"STUPEFY" James yelled as he pointed his wand at Harry. James hated the fact that he would have to resort to this type of behaviour, but he knew that Harry would never come with James, or even let him anywhere near himself willingly.

At once Harry's full body shield came up and the stupefy curse was instantly absorbed. Harry brought down his shield as he turned around and levelled his wand at the three men standing before him.

"You never do learn, Potter do you?" Harry said in an angry voice.

James flinched at the anger in Harry's voice. For the first time James understood where all that hate was coming from. James tried to block out the images of the abuse Harry had suffered as a child.

"Harry! I know how you're feeling right now! Please, just give me one minute to explain" James tried. He only needed one minute for Harry to let down his guard, once Harry was with James again, he would make Harry believe the truth.

“Explain? What is it that you want to explain, Potter? Nothing you say will change your fate now. Your death is certain and it will be at my hands” Harry spat at him and threw an acid spurt spell at James. James only managed to block the spell, only because Sirius and Remus had joined in and blocked the spell together.

Harry glared at the other two men. Before Harry could throw another spell at the three men in front of him, he heard the sound of hurrying feet and swishing of cloaks. They had company.

“He’s right over there! He came out of that pub and went in that direction over there!” a voice was heard.

Harry looked behind him, he was only a few steps away from the edge of the anti-apparation wards. If he could make it over there, he would be able to apparate home. Harry eyed the three men in front of him. He had to take them down first, that was the only way he could escape.

Suddenly James’s worried eyes met Harry’s and Harry stopped the killing curse from coming out of his mouth.

“Harry! Run!” James said.

Harry thought he had misheard James. He couldn’t have possibly told Harry to run and escape! But Harry’s doubts were cleared when Sirius and Remus turned their wands towards the sound of oncoming Aurors.

“Prongs! Get him out of here! We’ll slow them down” Sirius yelled and at once the two men started firing spells that made the walls around them collapse, successfully blocking the way to Harry.

Harry was stunned. These men were actually helping him. ‘No’ Harry thought. ‘It’s a trap, I’m not going to fall for it’. Harry moved away as James stepped nearer to him. James stopped in his tracks and looked sorrowfully at Harry.

“Harry, please...” James started but was cut off by the sound of the Aurors screaming spells to lift the collapsed walls away. He turned to

Harry, knowing that whatever the consequences, Harry had to get out of here now.

“Harry, Run! Go! If they catch you you’ll be given the Kiss! Go now, Run!”

Harry stood defiantly,

“What are you up to now, Potter? What trap have you set up for me?” Harry asked as he moved a few steps nearer the edge of the wards.

“I haven’t done anything! I would never hurt you!” Suddenly James had an idea. He wasn’t sure it would work, but it was something.

“Go back to the place you call home, go back to him! But you should do one thing, Harry. Ask your ‘*father*’ about Wormtail. Ask him about his faithful Death Eater, Peter Pettigrew” James had spat the word ‘*father*’ at Harry. He wanted to shock Harry into actually doing what James had said.

“I know every Death Eater in my father’s ranks. There is no one named Wormtail or Peter Pettigrew! There never has been!” Harry shouted back as he continued to step nearer to the edge of the wards.

James felt his heart stop at Harry’s words. So did that mean Wormtail had been killed by Voldemort? James still continued to shout at Harry.

“Is that what you’ve been told? I would dig a little deeper, Harry. You might find the truth hidden deep, beneath all the lies”

Harry shot a spell at James which only scraped his arm but sent waves of pain through him. James gasped and clutched at his arm. At once Harry flipped backwards and landed in the area that was not protected by the wards. With one last look at the three men, Harry disappeared back to Riddle Manor.

Sirius and Remus wasted no time. The Aurors were nearly through the debris of the collapsed walls. The two men grabbed onto James and ran to the edge of the wards as well. Before the first of the Aurors blasted their way through the fallen rocks, the three marauders had also disappeared from the scene.

Chapter Thirty Five

True to her word, Hermione had paid Damien a visit and had brought Ron and Ginny along as well. Although, not much studying happened as the four teens spent their time discussing Harry.

"How long do you think he'll be able to hide for?" Hermione asked with a regretful look in her eyes.

"Everyone's looking for him. Sooner or later, Harry will get caught" she continued to say.
"No, Harry won't get caught. Harry said that if he doesn't want to be found then no one will be able to get to him" Damien said quietly.

No one wanted to correct Damien. It would do nothing to upset him. But the other three Gryffindors knew that Harry couldn't hide forever.

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Harry had been thinking about Potter's words. He wanted to just forget about them, but something kept nagging at him. Why did Potter let him go? Why couldn't he remember Damien? What did Potter mean about asking his father about his most faithful Death Eater?

Harry remembered the words clearly.

'I would dig a little deeper, Harry. You might find the truth hidden deep, beneath all the lies'

Harry tried to clear his mind. His father wouldn't lie to him. Harry was certain about that. Lord Voldemort had no reason to lie to him. After all he had taken him in when Harry was only four years old. He made him strong by marking him as the heir to Slytherin. Lord Voldemort was the one who made Harry what he was today. A warrior, an exceptionally strong wizard and Harry could never doubt that. However, aside from all that, Harry couldn't help but feel curious about Potter's words. What possible truth could he have been referring to?

Harry decided that he was going to find out if a Death eater named Wormtail or Peter Pettigrew ever existed. If only to squash all doubts that Potter's words had brought to Harry's mind.

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It was now exactly one week since James had seen Harry in Diagon Alley. James continued to go to the muggle world to try and find little Johns club. He knew that if he found the club then they would get the chance to get to Harry. What James didn't expect was to find a lot more than Harry.

It was late afternoon and James, Sirius, Remus and Dumbledore were making their way out of another club. They had some success today. The manager of this particular club knew about Little Johns fight club. He told the four wizards that he had spoken to John earlier that day and that his venue for tonight's fight was only a few miles away from where they were.

James hurried over to the said location with the other three wizards. Their plan was to lay low and wait for Harry to show up. They had considered talking to this John person about 'Alex' and when he was going to be coming to the club. However, Dumbledore decided against that plan as he didn't want Harry to be informed that there were four men asking about him. It could lead to Harry disappearing from the muggle world.

James was the first to see the run down building that was acting as the venue for the fight club. It looked ready to collapse and James couldn't figure out why anyone would want to hold such an event in this place. The door was open and the four wizards could hear instructions being yelled inside. James noticed a strange vehicle parked a little distance away. It was bigger than most muggle cars. He knew, from many, many lectures from Lily about muggle items, that he was looking at a trailer home. It was really quite big and looked like it was quite spacious inside.

The four wizards had decided to go inside the club and ask what time the fight was going to start. They planned on acting like tourists who had been informed about this fantastic fight club from their friends in this city. It would explain any weird behaviour on their part. Just

before Dumbledore walked inside the building there was a shout heard from within the trailer.

“Nigel! Nigel, honey don’t do that. Come in here right now!”

The four wizards stopped in their tracks and watched as a little boy ran out of the trailer, giggling and squealing with joy. James turned around and watched the child jump around all the while laughing and enjoying himself. A smile crept onto his face. The child was beautiful. He looked around the age of fourteen, maybe fifteen months old. He was still not quite sure of his feet and was constantly falling on his hands and knees. But he would get back up and attempt at running and hiding again. It was obvious he was trying to play hide and seek. The woman’s voice sounded again and the child squealed again and tried to hide.

“Nigel! Sweetie. Come back inside!”

Dumbledore was looking intently at the child. His blue eyes were focused on the small boy and he wasn’t even blinking.

“Dumbledore! What’s the matter?” James asked as he looked at Dumbledore’s frowned expression.

“This child seems familiar to me...don’t you think he looks like...Neville Longbottom”

James turned around to look at the child again. The young boy had light brown hair and big brown eyes. Other than that, James couldn’t really see any similarities. All kids looked like that.

“No...I can’t see any similarity there” James said just as Remus interjected.

“No, James, Dumbledore is right. That kid looks exactly like Neville did when he was that age”

Sirius agreed with Remus. The four men stood still, watching the boy run around trying to hide somewhere.

“I think we should take a closer look” Dumbledore said and turned from the door and walked nearer to the trailer. James was about to shout out, when Sirius motioned for him to come over with Dumbledore as well. James was getting annoyed. So what if that kid looked like Neville. They weren’t here for that, they were here to find Harry. James didn’t voice his arguments though. He was surprised when he saw Dumbledore point his wand at Sirius and muttered a spell, which made Sirius, well, transparent was the best descriptive word. He wasn’t invisible but he was transparent. Dumbledore repeated the same spell on Remus and James before casting it onto himself.

Now no one could detect the four men’s presence. They moved closer to the trailer. They stopped when they were a few feet away from the boy, who was still running around.

“Man, that kid’s hyper” Sirius whispered to James. James laughed softly. The child actually reminded him of Harry. He was the same at that age, always active and hyper.

Suddenly the child stopped running around and stood stock still. He looked at his right hand side. There was a patch of trees growing there and as it was approaching dusk, it was quite dark. The child stood for a moment watching the trees swaying in the cold breeze. Suddenly the child let out an excited yell and ran towards the trees.

James couldn’t see what the kid had seen, but it had clearly made him really excited.

“Lex! Lex! Leexx!” the child screamed as he ran further towards the trees.

“What is with that kid? Are all muggle kids like that?” Sirius asked.

“How are we supposed to know” Remus whispered.

“Alright! Why are we standing here, stalking a child? We are supposed to be looking for Harry, shouldn’t we go and....” James’s words were caught in his throat as he saw a figure appear from the shadow of the trees.

The figure stepped out of the darkness and the small child threw his arms around the person's legs James heard the intake of breaths around him and a whispered curse from Sirius as they all recognised the figure.

Harry stooped low and picked the little boy up. The child threw his arms around Harry.

"Hey, what are you doing out here, little man? You should be inside. Look how dark it is" Harry said as he carried the little boy over to the trailer.

James watched the scene unfold around him in shock. So that's why the child was screaming 'lex'. He was actually trying to say 'Alex'.

"Nigel! Nigel, get in here, it's too dark...oh hi Alex. Nice surprise"

A woman came out from the trailer and stood near the door. Her back was to the four wizards, so they couldn't see her face.

"Just had to see John again, how are you Fiona?" Harry asked as he deposited the little boy into his mother's arms.

"Oh, you know, busy like always. John's in there" the woman pointed to the building across from her.

"Are you taking part tonight?" the woman asked.

"That's what I need to talk to him about" Harry said with a smile on his face.

James had figured out that this was John's wife and kid. He remembered being told that 'Alex' was friendly with this family but James was shocked to see how open Harry was with them. However James was not quite prepared for the shock that followed. He nearly cried out in disbelief as he saw the face of the woman Harry had called Fiona. As the woman turned around to place the young child on the ground, James, Sirius, Remus and Dumbledore saw the woman's face clearly.

She looked exactly like the last time he had seen her, she still had the long brown hair and big brown eyes. She had a round face and her eyes still held a gentle, kind look. James was looking at Alice Longbottom.

"This...this can't be...oh Merlin! This can't be true" James heard Sirius whisper. James wished he could see the expressions of the other three wizard's faces. Dumbledore was still silent.

"Come inside Alex, it's freezing out here" Alice said as she gestured for Harry to come inside.

"No, I can't, I'm kind of pressed for time today. Later on perhaps." Harry said as he stepped away from the trailer.

"Alex, we don't see you for around four months and then we see you nearly every week, but you still don't spend any time with us. Look how excited Nigel got with you visiting him" Alice gestured to the little child who was tugging on his mother's hand to play chases with him.

Harry looked affectionately at him.

"I don't think it's just me that make's him so excited" Harry joked.

Just then a sound was heard over from the building. Someone had come out of the run down building. James swung around to see who had shouted over to Harry.

"Alex! My, my, aren't we blessed. Three visits in the one week!"

James had to clamp his hand over his mouth to stop from crying out in surprise.

Frank Longbottom was making his way over to Harry. He looked a little tired and seemed to look a bit older but otherwise was in perfect health.

"I have to make up for the last four months" Harry said as he shook hands with Frank.

"You never did say where you went. What were you up to?" Frank asked as he picked up the young boy from the ground.

Harry looked at Nigel playing in the arms of his father and then smiled.

"I was a bit tied up, couldn't quite get out of a tight spot. But I managed in the end" Harry laughed.

"I'm not even going to ask!" Frank laughed back.

"Listen, John, I need to speak to you about something. Mind if we have a quick chat?" Harry asked and Frank instantly handed the little boy over to Alice and led Harry towards the building. Alice took Nigel into the trailer and closed the door.

The four wizards stood out in the cold, minds reeling from all that they had witnessed.

"I think we should sit down" Dumbledore's voice sounded.

The spell was lifted so that the wizards could see each other again. James looked at the pale faces of the other wizards. Their expressions were pretty much like James's. Puzzlement, shock and astonishment. Even Dumbledore looked like he was feeling faint. The four wizards quickly went over to the trees they had spotted Harry in and cast a silencing charm over themselves so that no one could hear their conversation.

Once hidden in the shadows, the four wizards tried to make sense of what had just happened.

"Okay, what just happened there?" James cried out.

"Well, it seems that Frank and Alice aren't actually dead but very much alive and have now adapted to living like muggles and like to be called John and Fiona!" Sirius answered.

"Sirius! Now is not the time" James warned him.

"We have to figure out what's going on. If that is in fact Frank and Alice then we need to find out why they've been hiding and why they didn't contact anyone from the Order to help them. It's been nearly

two years since they had been presumably murdered.” Remus added in.

The three wizards looked at Dumbledore, expecting him to have all the answers.

“I think the first thing we should do is confront either Frank or Alice. It is imperative that we discover the true identities of these people. Only once we are convinced that these people are the true Longbottoms’ can we do anything” James said quietly.

“Okay, how do we do that?” Sirius asked.

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Sirius found himself standing in front of the trailer door. He cursed his big mouth before knocking on the door. Alice opened the door and Sirius felt his words leave him. He was looking at Alice again. He had been very good friends with her. The Longbottoms were very friendly with the Potter family and therefore were very close to Sirius and Remus. Sirius saw no flicker of recognition in Alice’s brown eyes.

“Yes, can I help you with something?” Alice asked.

Sirius snapped out of his daze and asked Alice if there was a phone box anywhere near, since his car had broken down and he needed to phone someone for help. Sirius tried to remember all the muggle terms James and Remus had just recited to him.

Alice gave him directions to the nearest phone booth.

“Thank you very much! Oh, is that your child?” Sirius said as he saw the hyperactive child appear next to his mother.

Alice looked at her boy and smiled.

“Yes, I am” Alice answered. She didn’t seem to mind talking to a complete stranger. That was the same as the old Alice. She loved making friends and talking to everyone.

“You only have the one child?” Sirius asked. He wanted to know the answer to this question, since Sirius couldn’t believe that Alice and Frank would leave their son, Neville alone like that in the wizarding world, in the middle of war.

“Yes, only one. Believe me one’s enough” she joked and Sirius felt his heart sink in his chest. What ever was going on? This couldn’t possibly be Alice Longbottom. She would never deny Neville’s existence. And why didn’t she recognise Sirius?

Sirius walked back over to Dumbledore and his two friends and told them about Alice’s response to his questions.

Dumbledore listened carefully. He spoke after a couple minutes of silence.

“That is Alice Longbottom. I can feel her magical aura. She was a very bright student and I taught her myself. I can feel her magical signature. Why she is acting and living like a muggle, I don’t know. But what I can say for certain is that no mother could leave her child in the midst of a war. If Alice is not with Neville than I think it is safe to assume that the only reason for that is because she can’t remember him. It is my assumption that Frank and Alice are under powerful memory charms. It could be possible that their minds have been ‘obliterated’. That would explain why they think of themselves as John and Fiona. That is why they live like muggles and have no memory of Sirius. They recognise Harry as Alex as well, whereas Frank and Alice would recognise Harry as James’s son in a heartbeat.” Dumbledore explained.

James agreed. Frank and Alice would have recognised Harry immediately as a Potter.

“So, what the hell happened that night at Longbottoms? Their house had burned down? What about those...” Remus trailed off.

He was about to ask about the bodies of Frank and Alice and remembered that there had been no bodies found in the house. All they found was ashes. They had been told that the Dark Prince had set the house on fire and had burned the Longbottoms alive. They people surrounding the house had given testimonies that they heard

anguished screams coming from the house, which they all believed to belong to the Longbottoms.

James felt his head spin. So Harry had not killed the Longbottoms. He had saved them! But why? Harry had no reason to save them. Furthermore, he had erased their memories and given them new identities as Little John and Fiona. None of this made any sense.

Dumbledore seemed to be reading James's mind as he answered his thoughts.

"I think that the memory Harry was desperate to hide from everyone was what had truly happened to the Longbottoms."

James looked up in surprise. Of course! It made sense now. Damien had told them that Harry had said that if Lord Voldemort found out about his memories he would never forgive him. Damien had said that Harry had panicked and had near enough begged Damien to get the pensive back. It all made sense.

"We have to get Frank and Alice back to the wizarding world" James started. This was going to cause a big difference in Harry's sentence. Harry had still killed and performed the Unforgivable curses, but the death of the Longbottoms was what had made most Aurors determined to find and punish Harry. This would definitely improve Harry's chances at survival with the Ministry.

"I'm afraid we can't do that, James" Dumbledore said as he looked at him with sorrowful eyes.

"What? Why not? We can't just leave the Longbottoms here! They should come back home" James argued. He couldn't understand why Dumbledore wanted to stop him.

"James, they have been living like this for the last two years or so, they are safe here. I don't think it would be particularly safe to bring them back just now. Harry is still with Voldemort. The news of the Longbottoms survival will reach him one way or another. Think what he will do to Harry for his deception. Harry might even be killed. We can't take that chance. Once we have Harry, we can bring the Longbottoms back. Until then it is safe to leave them where they are.

No one will mention this to anyone. You can't even tell Lily, James. We can't risk the information leaking out. There are many spies inside the Ministry, we all know that. If the Ministry find out about the Longbottoms, Voldemort will also find out." Dumbledore finished.

James looked at Dumbledore helplessly. He really wanted the Longbottoms to come back to their world, back to their son, Neville and back to their lives. But James understood, Harry was in danger from this. Once they had Harry with them, the Longbottoms could be brought back and hopefully their memories could be restored.

For whatever reason Harry had saved Frank and Alice, he had kept that fact hidden. If Lord Voldemort found out he would definitely punish Harry severely.

"Come on, we have to go into that building before Harry leaves" Remus said quietly.

The four wizards left quickly and moved towards the building. Before they entered, Dumbledore pointed his wand at James and changed his appearance. He gave him blonde curly hair and changed the shape of his nose.

"So that Frank doesn't link your appearance with 'Alex' and get suspicious" he explained.

James sighed and braced himself. As soon as they entered the run down club, they saw Frank instructing other men to get the place ready. James felt emotions rush at him. Frank was a good friend. James had never thought he would be able to see him again, talk to him again.

Frank noticed the four men at the door and hurried towards them.

"I'm sorry folks, the club doesn't open for another two hours. You're welcome to come back then" Frank said as he approached the men.

James found his voice choked with emotions and wasn't able to say anything. Dumbledore answered for him.

“Sorry, we didn’t know the opening times. We were just wondering if Alex was taking part in tonight’s fight.”

Frank’s face turned from a pleasant expression to one of worry.

“How do you know Alex?” Frank asked them.

“We don’t know him personally, we’ve heard a great deal about him from our friends. We heard that he comes to your club every so often. We were just wondering if he was taking part tonight” Dumbledore explained.

Frank’s expression softened.

“Oh...well, no Alex will not be taking part tonight. He’s busy with other things just now, so won’t be coming here for awhile.”

James realised that Harry was nowhere to be seen.

“Do you know where we can find him?” James asked.

“No, he comes to see me. I don’t contact him. You just missed him though. He left about ten minutes ago” Frank answered.

James cursed under his breath. In all the discussion about Alice and Frank being discovered alive, the four wizards hadn’t noticed Harry leaving.

“Can I ask you something sir? Are you taking over this place and renovating it as your own club?” Remus asked suddenly.

Frank laughed and answered.

“This place? No, I just got a good deal on renting it for a while. But I like to move around. Go to different places. London is so big, you should see all of it”

“Oh...have you always done your business like that?” Remus asked.

“Yeah, well that’s how the previous boss used to do things, I just got used to doing it like this as well”

“Previous boss? You mean you’ve taken over from someone? Remus asked.

Frank laughed again.

“Yeah. All of this belonged to John Allen. He was a really kind man. Treated me like a son. He was getting too old to move around all the stuff for the club, so I used to do it for him. He kind of left me everything when he died. Didn’t have a family you see. That’s why people know me as Little John. They just assumed I was his son. I let people think what they want. It doesn’t bother me”

Dumbledore thanked Frank and left with the other three men. They had a lot to discuss when they got home. James knew that Dumbledore was right. No one, other than the four of them could find out about the Longbottoms. Not until Harry was safely away from Voldemort. James couldn’t understand why Harry went against Voldemort’s command and saved Alice and Frank. ‘I guess only Harry can answer that’ James thought to himself silently as they made their way back to Godric’s Hollow.

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Harry sat in his room. He was glad he had spoken to Frank. It meant he could stay away from him for a while. Harry loved going to see the Longbottoms, but every time he saw them he remembered that terrible night. Harry took off his ring and transfigured it into his pensive. Harry had checked his pensive for all the important memories. Everything seemed to be normal. None of the charms put on his secret memory had been tampered with. Harry has checked his pensive around ten times already. He was so thankful that his secret memory hadn’t been revealed.

He was very grateful of the fact that he had not killed Frank and Alice and given the chance he would always do the same thing. But a bigger part of him was ashamed that he had failed to carry out his father’s orders. Harry watched the silvery mist swim around inside the back pensive. For some reason Harry wanted to see the memory again. He dipped his head into the pensive.

Harry landed on his feet and looked at the memory before him. He was standing in the Longbottom's living room. There were five Death Eaters standing around the fallen forms of Frank and Alice. They were sending crucio curses at the both of them. Harry remembered who all of them were. Malfoy, Hunt, Riley, Bella and Bergeron. Harry watched his own self appear in the doorway. He had been instructed to stay outside for a while. Harry shuddered at the sound of Frank and Alice screaming. Harry watched as his own self walked into the room, his face covered in a silver mask.

"Enough!" he said.

The Death Eaters lowered their wands and looked around at their Dark Prince.

"We have wasted enough time" the masked boy continued to say.

The Death Eaters moved away and stood behind the silver masked boy. Harry brought his wand onto Frank's bloodied face.

"You have one last chance Longbottom. Join us and we will spare your life and your family's as well" he said.

Frank looked up at the boy in front of him. He turned his head painfully to look at his wife. Once he got a reaction from Alice, did he turn to look at Harry.

"Never!" he replied in a raspy voice.

"Very well" the Dark Prince replied.

"Leave" he instructed to the other Death Eaters. At once all five Death Eaters left so that the Longbottoms were left alone with the Dark Prince.

This was the instructions that Lord Voldemort had given to them. Harry remembered the instructions clearly. Lord Voldemort had told him to accompany the Death Eaters to the Longbottom's residence. The Auror and his wife were to be given the chance to join Voldemort's side. If they refused then their death was to be delivered by Harry. Lord Voldemort had spoken to Harry in private.

“Harry, before you kill them I want you to remove your mask and let the dying couple see your face.”

Harry had been really surprised by that order. Firstly, Harry didn't know why he was being sent to kill the Longbottoms. Harry was fourteen at the time and had just begun carrying out his assignments. So far he had dealt with Death Eaters that were giving his father problems. Harry had not complained though. He was his father's soldier. Wherever his father instructed him to go and whatever he instructed Harry to do, Harry would obey without question.

Harry nodded his head and told his father that he would remove his mask and let the Longbottoms see his face before they die.

“But father, what about the other Death Eaters. You told me to keep my mask on in front of them.” Harry had asked.

Other than a handful of inner circle Death Eaters, no one else knew Harry even existed. Lord Voldemort had promised Harry that he would introduce him soon. The fact that the majority of Death Eaters didn't know about the Dark Prince, only increased their fear of the mysterious killer who wiped out anyone, daring to betray Lord Voldemort.

“Don't worry, they will be instructed to leave, even Malfoy. No one will remain with you” Lord Voldemort had replied.

Harry stood in front of the fallen forms of Frank and Alice.

Without another word, Harry reached over and pulled his silver mask away from his face. At first there was no reaction for Frank and Alice. Then, slowly Frank and Alice focused their eyes on the raven haired boy standing before them.

“Oh! My God, Alice! Alice...it's...its Harry! Alice, look its Harry!” Frank began saying in a hushed tone.

Alice also raised her eyes to look into Harry's eyes. She looked at Harry, unable to say anything. Slowly Frank got to his feet, helping his wife to stand with him.

“Harry! What are you...I don’t understand, how is this possible!” Frank said while trying to adjust his weight so that he could help up his injured wife.

Harry remained silent as he took in their reaction. ‘They know the Potters! That is why father wanted them to see my face. So that they know exactly who it was that killed them’ Harry thought silently.

“I have done as my father asked of me. Now, you have one last chance! Join us or face your death” Harry said in a steady voice.

Frank and Alice looked at each other in confusion. Understanding showed on their faces as they realised that Lord Voldemort had not killed Harry, but raised him as his own son, so that he would kill on his command.

“We would never join a monster that could take someone’s child and corrupt them, like he had done with you” Frank said in a clear voice, despite his injuries.

Harry sent a stinging hex at Frank’s arm, and the Auror gasped out in pain. At once Alice grabbed onto her husband and tried to block him from any more curses.

Harry looked at her bravery and thought how foolish she was. Harry levelled his wand on Frank and began forming the words to the killing curse.

“NO! If you’re going to kill anyone, kill me first! I’m not going to stand and watch my husband die!” cried a hysterical Alice.

“No!...Alice...move out of the way!” Frank cried out and tried to move her away. But the stubborn woman continued to block Frank.

“What difference will it make? You both are going to die today anyway” Harry said.

“Kill me first!” Alice said with tears running down her face. Frank tried to push her away, but she wouldn’t move. Every time Frank pushed her away, she would come right back and shield him.

Harry laughed, amused at their pathetic attempts to save one another.

Harry pointed his wand at Alice.

“NO!” cried Frank and tried to get to her. Harry sent a body binding curse at him and the Auror fell to the ground, unable to move or do anything to protect his wife.

Harry moved his wand so that it was pointing at Alice’s chest.

“AVADA KEDAV...” Harry stopped mid way of the killing curse.

Harry’s green eyes widened with shock. He moved the wand over Alice again. Harry seemed unable to speak. His hand, holding the wand, began to tremble as Harry continued to try and say the killing curse. It was as if Harry had lost the ability to speak.

Harry suddenly let out an angry cry and sent a jet of white light towards one of the windows, successfully smashing it. He strode forward and moved Alice out of the way and pointed his wand at the bound form of Frank. Harry pointed his wand at Frank and was just about to send a jet of green light at him when Alice threw herself in front of her husband. Harry stopped and looked at her with fury.

“Move out of the way, woman” Harry yelled at her, but the crying woman held onto her husband and refused to move.

“Prince! Prince is everything alright?” Malfoy’s voice came through the broken window.

Harry was panicking, he brought the wand back towards the stubborn woman, but once again he was unable to utter the killing curse.

“I’m coming in!” came Malfoy’s voice.

“NO!” cried Harry.

“I’m dealing with them!” Harry yelled. Even though the words left Harry’s mouth he could hear Malfoy trying to come in, Harry acted on instinct. He sent a locking spell on the door and then quickly grabbed the woman. Harry pointed at the wall facing him and shouted.

“TRANSFERO PORTALINE”

At once a huge portal opened up and the surrounding items began flying into it. Harry levitated Frank's bound form and threw him inside the portal. He then tried to push Alice through as well, but she grabbed onto Harry's robes.

“What are you doing? Where are you sending us?” she cried out.

“If you don't wish to die today, I suggest you keep quiet and do as I say!” Harry bellowed and tried to loosen her grip away from his robes.

“Why should I trust you? One minute ago you were ready to kill me and now you're saving my life?” Alice asked.

Harry looked directly at her.

“You have a life force within you that I can never destroy” With that said Harry pushed her into the portal. As soon as the portal's mouth closed, Malfoy came striding in.

“What's going on? Where are the Longbottoms!” he asked as his grey eyes searched frantically for the two bodies that should now be dead.

Harry looked coldly at Malfoy.

“Prince, where are the Longbottoms? What did you do? Did you complete the assignment?” Malfoy asked in a scared voice.

“This assignment can't be completed. Father wouldn't want three lives lost when he sent me to destroy only two.” Harry replied.

“Prince! The Dark Lord gave an order. We have to complete that or there will be dire consequences!” Malfoy shouted back.

Harry knew that Malfoy was right. Harry should have been able to kill Frank Longbottom if not Alice Longbottom.

Harry knew he had messed up. He had failed his father but Harry knew that no matter what, he wouldn't have been able to hurt the woman. Not when she was in that condition.

"I know I have failed. Father will understand though, the woman, Alice Longbottom. She is in such a condition that even father won't want her harmed" Harry said as he neared the door.

"You mean, because she's with child?" Malfoy asked suddenly.

Harry stopped in his tracks, a look of cold fury swept over him.

"You knew!" he asked angrily.

"Yes I knew, and the Dark Lord knows as well. He sent you on this assignment regardless of that fact" Malfoy said angrily.

Harry felt the ground slip from his feet. His father knew! He knew that the woman was carrying a child and he still gave the orders for her torture and death. Harry couldn't believe it.

"You're lying! Father would never give such orders. He doesn't want to destroy innocent lives!" Harry said.

To Harry's surprise Malfoy began laughing at Harry's naive ness.

"Innocent? Prince, no one is innocent anymore. This is war, Harry. You have to realise that if you are going to serve the Dark Lord!" Malfoy spat at him.

Harry had enough. He raised his wand at Malfoy and shouted,

"OBLIVATE!"

At once the spell hit Malfoy and the blond haired man had a dazed look in his eyes. Harry at once told Malfoy to leave and wait outside. Malfoy, still in his dazed state, walked away from the house and waited outside obediently.

Harry set to work at once he filled the house with sounds of anguished screaming and transfigured two tables into disfigured bodies. Harry walked towards the door and took out his silver mask. He put in back on and took out a triangular shaped object from his robes. He held it in his hand for a moment before throwing it hard towards the wall. At immediate contact the device exploded into a ball

of fire and the entire house was engulfed in flames. Harry walked away and motioned for his Death Eaters to follow as they headed back home.

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Harry felt his feet hit the ground and he realised he had come out of the pensive and back into his room. Harry was shaking as he sat down and tried to recover from his memory. Harry remembered how that day had changed his life. Not only did Harry disobey his father's orders for the first time, but he had learned a harsh truth about Lord Voldemort. His father didn't care about innocent lives as much as Harry thought he did. After that day Harry had decided that he would never discuss his war tactics with his father again. Harry would never be able to stand up against his father's orders. If his father didn't care about innocent lives being lost in the path of war then there was nothing Harry could do about that.

Harry would never dream of confronting his father about this fact. Lord Voldemort had brought Harry up, gave him powers and made him stronger than any other wizard. Harry would always remain on his side, but Harry couldn't bring himself to hurt a child or an innocent. It was just something Harry was unable to do.

Harry had opened the portal containing Frank and Alice that same night. He had performed powerful memory charms on both of them, giving them fake memories of living as muggles and currently looking for work. Harry knew John Allen from his regular fight club training and introduced him to Frank and Alice, claiming that they were victims of an accident that gave them memory loss. The fact that Alice was pregnant had helped in Frank getting the job as John's fight club helper.

Harry had never thought he would keep in contact with the Longbottoms but the arrival of Nigel had pulled Harry into keeping in contact with them. Nigel was the reason Harry defied his father's orders for the first time. Harry had sensed Nigel's life force within Alice when he drew his wand at her. That was why he couldn't kill her. Harry didn't know how he found out that Alice was pregnant. She was only in the early days of her pregnancy and Harry suspected that no

Chapter Thirty Six

Harry knew it was going to be difficult to ask his father if he knew someone named Wormtail. For the simple fact that his father would definitely want to know why Harry was asking. Harry didn't want to upset him by saying that James Potter had mentioned that name to him. Lord Voldemort would definitely get upset that Harry chose to believe Potter, that Lord Voldemort was hiding something.

Harry knew asking Bella was probably even worse than asking his father, so that left only one person, Lucius Malfoy. This was going to be easy since Draco was usually over a lot, ever since Hogwarts had closed down. Harry was extremely overjoyed that Dumbledore was too afraid to run that joke of a school anymore. Harry knew it was largely due to Harry's escape and the Hogwarts Express incident that had forced the school to close. 'Serves that old fool right, that manipulative, son of a b...' Harry's thoughts were interrupted by Draco's words.

"Are you going to move, or are you planning on staying there for ever"

Harry looked at Draco and realised that Draco was referring to the wizard chess in front of them.

"Oh, um there, check mate" Harry said almost lazily.

Draco looked at the chess board with a surprised expression. He hadn't seen that move coming from Harry.

"How is it that you've become good at chess, all of a sudden" Draco asked suspiciously.

Harry shrugged and lay back in his comfy chair.

"I've always been good. Just never had as much time to practise, that's all" Harry replied.

"Still no luck with the next assignment?" Draco asked.

"No, it seems that Hogwarts Express incident is still fresh in father's mind. He's adamant that I should make up for all the training time I

missed before he sends me out on anymore assignments” Harry replied.

“So, you’re doing well with your training then” Draco mocked as he looked at Harry lying comfortably in his chair.

“Malfoy, I trained for six hours straight today, so stop with the cheek”

Harry and Draco continued playing their chess game. Some half an hour later there was a knock on Harry’s door and Lucius came in.

“Draco, are you ready to leave?” he asked quietly.

“Not yet, father” Draco replied as he concentrated on his next move.

Harry sat up as he saw Lucius enter his room. ‘This is a good chance!’

Harry thought to himself.

“Why don’t you wait here, Lucius? It might be fun to watch your son lose spectacularly to me” Harry said, while giving Draco a mocking look.

Draco looked at Harry and narrowed his grey eyes at him.

“Right! We’ll see about that then” Draco said as he ordered another piece to move and smash Harry’s piece into smithereens.

Lucius sat down and watched the two boys play for a while. As expected, Harry won the game, leaving a very frustrated and annoyed Draco.

“I don’t get it! You weren’t good at playing chess. That was the one thing that I was definitely better at than you. Why did you have to become bloody good at that as well?” Draco asked snidely.

“Draco! Watch your mouth! You seem to forget who you’re speaking to at times. Harry is the Dark Prince. You should hold your tongue or the Dark Lord will make arrangements to have it removed altogether!” Lucius said venomously to his son.

Draco gulped and looked away from his father. Harry took the opportunity he was waiting for.

“Lucius, you should loosen up a bit. Father is not here and won’t be back at the Manor until tomorrow, so no one will say anything to Draco, and stop calling me Prince all the time! It’s getting annoying” Harry got the result he had been hoping for. Lucius looked up at Harry but before he got a chance to say anything, Draco spoke out.

“What’s wrong with being called Prince? It’s much better than being called some other stupid pet name”

“Yeah, I guess so. But it still gets annoying” Harry responded.

“It’s better than being called something like ‘tweetle toes’ or ‘sugar bun’ or ‘wormtail’...”

Harry saw Lucius’s reaction from the corner of his eye as he said ‘wormtail’. Lucius was smiling at the names Harry was saying like ‘tweetle toes’ and ‘sugar bun’ but as soon as Harry said ‘wormtail’ the smile on his face vanished and he looked startled for a moment. Lucius quickly composed back to his usual expressionless face but the tiny beads of sweat on his forehead had given him away.

Harry tried to act normally himself, but he felt panic set in as he took in Lucius’s reaction. Harry had been hoping that Lucius would show no recognition to that particular name, but judging by the blond man’s reactions, Wormtail was definitely someone he knew.

Lucius left with Draco quite soon after that and left Harry with a lot to think about. Harry had already planted the tiny tracking device onto Lucius’s cloak, so that Harry would know where the senior Malfoy was at all times. As Harry expected, Malfoy returned to the Manor later on that evening, he went straight to Bella’s room.

Harry waited a couple of minutes before heading towards Bella’s room. Harry was so thankful for Draco’s unintentional help earlier that day. Draco had showed Harry two pieces of flesh coloured string.

“What the hell is that?” Harry said looking at the strange strings.

“Extendable ears” Draco had responded.

“Where did you get them from?” Harry asked as he took the strings into his hands and began examining them.

“Filch’s office. Since the school was closing down, a bunch of students ransacked his office on the last day of school. He had loads of things he had banned from the students. We got quite a lot of cool things. These extendable ears were there, so I took them along with other things.”

Draco had emptied a bag onto Harry’s desk to show him the loot from Filch’s office. But Harry was too occupied with the extendable ears. That was when he had decided that he was going to use them as part of his plan.

Harry took the flesh coloured string out of his pocket and placed one end under Bella’s door. Harry slipped the other end into his ear and hoped that no one was going to walk in on him literally eavesdropping.

“It must have been a coincidence. I can’t see how Harry could possibly found out about him” Bella’s voice sounded. Harry felt like the bottom of his stomach had dropped. This confirmed that they were trying to hide someone named Wormtail.

“No! It can’t just be a coincidence. It was the way Harry had said that name. Harry knows something. I don’t think he knows the truth otherwise he wouldn’t be so calm about things. He would probably have tried to burn us and everything around him to the ground!”

Harry felt his heart thump loudly in his chest. ‘What was Malfoy talking about? What truth? Why would Harry act so violently towards them?’

Harry continued listening to Lucius Malfoy talk in a panicked voice.

“We have to inform the Dark Lord. I have always said that keeping that worthless thing alive for so long was dangerous. I don’t think we should take the chance. I’m sure the Dark Lord will agree. It’s time we finished the little rodent’s life. Peter should be killed immediately!”

Harry stepped back from the door. The extendable ear was still in his ear. Peter! Malfoy had said the name Peter. That was the same name Potter had said. Peter Pettigrew!

Harry listened to the rest of the conversation. Bella had suggested going to the Dark Lord as soon as he returned the next morning. Malfoy had reluctantly agreed.

Harry crept back into his room and felt exhausted. Things had not turned out the way he had thought. Harry was sure that Wormtail or Peter Pettigrew didn't exist. He was certain that Malfoy was going to prove that there never had been any Death Eater by either of those names. Instead Harry had witnessed the blond haired man panic at the mention of him.

Harry lay down on his bed and tried to plan the next step. He would get up early tomorrow and follow Malfoy by using the tracker device. He was certain that Malfoy would lead Harry to Wormtail. Harry wanted to know what truth Wormtail held, that would make Harry react by 'burning everything to the ground'. Harry fell into an uneasy sleep, not knowing that his life would be forever changed after this night.

xx

Harry awoke to a sharp pain in his scar. 'Oh! Bloody hell, not again' Harry thought to himself as he clutched at his scar. The pain was gone quite quickly and Harry realised that Malfoy must have told his father about Harry mentioning Wormtail. Harry cursed under his breath. Now his father was going to demand where Harry had heard that name from. Harry decided that he was going to pretend that the name just came to him randomly. Harry was surprised when no one came to get Harry to tell him that Lord Voldemort wanted to speak to him. Harry climbed out of bed and quickly washed up. He got dressed and did a spell to see where Lucius Malfoy was at this moment. Harry saw that Malfoy was just walking out of the main doors and was going towards the apparition point, just outside Riddle Manor. Harry quickly followed him and just made it in time to see Malfoy disapparate from the Riddle Manor. Harry waited a couple of minutes

before tracking him again. He saw the location Malfoy had reached and quickly focused on apparating there as well.

Harry felt his feet slam onto the ground. Harry quickly looked around to see any signs of Malfoy. Harry saw that they had arrived in a place that looked as if it was miles away from any sort of living population. There were trees everywhere. He spotted the blond haired man walking away, deeper into these woods and Harry quickly made his way over towards him. It was completely silent. There weren't even any birds making any sort of noise. The only sounds heard were the sound of Harry's feet snapping the twigs on the ground. Harry struggled to keep quiet and to follow Malfoy. Harry saw Malfoy stop at the mouth of a cave and mutter some sort of curse. At once a red light enveloped the mouth of the cave and then disappeared. Harry realised that the cave was protected by a spell, so that it would stop anyone from entering or leaving the cave. Malfoy had just removed this protective spell.

Harry followed Malfoy quickly taking care to stay a few feet away from Malfoy. Harry couldn't believe how easy it was to track and follow an inner circle Death Eater. Harry stepped into the cave Malfoy had entered. He could easily see where Malfoy was since the Death Eater had done a lumos spell so he could see where he was going. The cave was very dark and smelled like rotting flesh. Harry had to struggle not to throw up what little food he had in him. Harry kept his eyes on the spot of light ahead of him.

Suddenly the light extinguished and Harry found himself being thrown into complete darkness. 'Shit' Harry cursed. He heard the sound of Malfoy's voice uttering another spell. The sound of rock being moved was heard and Harry hurried towards it. Harry realised that Malfoy was levitating a huge rock away from the mouth of an entrance. Harry was beginning to feel dread in the pit of his stomach. 'They can't possibly be keeping this Wormtail person in this place! How could he survive?'

Harry quickly slipped inside the new found entrance. As soon as Harry came inside he saw Malfoy cast the lumos spell again. The sight that met Harry nearly made him cry out. The cell was littered with what looked and smelled like human faeces and the remains of

what looked like animal bones. The smell was so overpowering that Harry felt his eyes water with repulsion. Harry tried to stifle his chokes at the awful smell. He felt like he couldn't breathe.

Harry didn't see the pile of rags lying in one corner of the cell. As the lumos spell cast the light on it Harry realised that the pile of rags was actually a small person. Harry put his hand over his mouth to stop from crying out. The person shied away from the light and tried to curl into a ball. Harry heard Malfoy laugh heartlessly.

"What! No warm welcome Wormtail. This is why you have no visitors."

The person didn't respond but seemed to be whimpering something. Malfoy's words confirmed that this person was definitely Wormtail and Harry felt his blood run cold at the thought of one of his father's loyal Death Eaters being kept like this. Whatever could he have done that would result in such punishment. Harry thought to himself.

"Well, Peter, your prayers have finally been answered. Your pathetic life has now come to an end" Malfoy raised his wand to point directly at the filthy man's chest.

Before Malfoy could form the words to the killing curse, Harry knocked Malfoy out with a 'stupefy' spell. Malfoy hit the filthy ground and lay still. Harry needed to know why this Wormtail person was being kept like this. He couldn't let Malfoy kill him, not yet anyway. Harry knew he could revive Malfoy before leaving. That way, his father would not punish Malfoy for failing an order.

Harry stepped closer to the trembling form on the ground. As Harry came nearer he noticed that Wormtail was whispering things to himself. He didn't even realise that Malfoy was about to kill him. He seemed to be caught in a daze of his own. Harry saw the filthy man was almost bald, large clumps of hair were missing from his head and his skin looked like it had not seen daylight or had been near water for years. The man was very skinny. He looked very frail and his whispered words sounded hoarse as if he had not used his voice in a long time.

Harry couldn't open his mouth due to the strong smell surrounding him. Harry cast an illuminating spell so that he wasn't pointing light at the trembling man. As soon as the cell was lit up with lights, Wormtail gave a petrified whimper and tried to shield his eyes. Harry felt sorry for the man. At the same time though. Harry knew the man must have done something truly awful to get such a punishment from his father. Lord Voldemort wasn't one to forgive or forget and his punishments were usually very harsh. Harry had never seen something like this though.

Before Harry got a chance to speak, Wormtail gingerly lifted his sallow face and looked at Harry. Harry wasn't expecting the stranger to recognise Harry, after all, they had never met but Wormtail's sunken eyes seemed to widen as he looked at Harry's face.

"J-J-James! James, is that...that you?" he asked weakly. Harry was taken aback. He stood silently as Wormtail dragged his weakened body towards him.

"James! Oh...James it is you! I k-knew you would come. I knew it. I'm s-sorry! I'm so, so s-sorry!" Wormtail began to sob and his words began to get mumbled together.

"I...I...I d-didn't want to do it! I didn't want to b-betray you, but the...the Dark L-Lord. He wouldn't leave me alone. He...he said that he was going to kill you and Lily. He wanted H-Harry. He said I-I had a c-choice. I could hand Harry to him and then he would spare you both. I'm not like you and Sirius. I'm not strong like Remus. I couldn't stand against him. The Dark Lord said he would...would give me power. He said he would make me stronger. I'm sorry James! I took Harry, I took him to Lord Voldemort!"

Harry stood listening to all the words that were coming out of Wormtail's mouth. Harry felt his heart thump so hard, his chest was beginning to hurt. It wasn't true! It couldn't be true. This person was probably insane. He had been locked up in this place for Merlin knows how long and that was obviously affecting his brain. For one thing he thought he was talking to James! Harry realised that he had made a mistake in coming here. Potter probably knew about Wormtail's insanity and had sent Harry after him just to confuse him.

Harry decided he was going to leave. Malfoy could take care of this filthy man. Harry turned away and wordlessly walked towards the fallen form of Malfoy, intending to revive him.

“He promised he would kill Harry!” Wormtail whispered. Harry stopped in his tracks and looked around at the small man, kneeling on the ground.

“The Dark Lord said that Harry was the chosen one, the one prophesised to kill Lord Voldemort. He said that once Harry died, he would be invincible. I thought that Harry would be killed. I knew that it was wrong but I still took him. I figured he was a kid. Fifteen months old! It couldn't hurt him to die as much as it would hurt if he was older! I thought the Dark Lord would kill Harry on the first night. But I was wrong! James...James he didn't kill Harry. He didn't kill him. He's done something worse. Much, much worse. James, please forgive me!”

Wormtail began to sob louder and didn't even realise Harry was standing far away from him. Harry couldn't help the sense of dread building within him. He knew that the man was crazy, he knew that what he was saying couldn't be true but Harry still approached the man and fought hard against his thoughts to leave.

“What? What did he do?” Harry asked.

“He...he's made him into a killer. He's going to make Harry kill for him. He's destroying Harry's soul!” Wormtail answered still rocking backwards and forwards clutching at his own arms and legs.

Harry felt his world spin as he heard the words leave Wormtail's mouth.

“He made Harry kill for the first time today. He made him kill! I knew that this would happen but I couldn't do anything to stop it. He's only ten years old. He's only a child, but Lord Voldemort made him kill!” Wormtail kept on whispering the word ‘kill’ softly. Harry finally snapped out of the trance he was in, at hearing Wormtail's words.

“You're lying! You don't know what you're talking about! I didn't start my assignments until I was fourteen! Not ten! You're lying!” Harry

shouted at him. Wormtail didn't even seem to notice Harry's words as he kept on repeating the words, 'child' and 'kill' over and over again.

"You're insane! I shouldn't even be listening to you and your foul lies."

"Lies...Lies...yes that's what he tells him! Lies, he's hurt Harry, hurt him...hurt him so much, but then he makes Harry believe that it was *you* who hurt him. But don't worry James, don't worry. I told Harry everything! Harry knows the truth now. I decided to make right what I had done wrong. I told Harry everything after I saw him kill that man. Kenny! Kenny was his name. He was a Death Eater and he was thinking about becoming a spy for the Order. Lord Voldemort made Harry watch the torture and then instructed Harry to kill him, it was Harry's first kill. No one was there except for Bella and Lord Voldemort. Harry was afraid, but he killed him. Harry killed him! He's only a kid. I saw it because I transformed into a rat and snuck in to see what was happening. I saw everything!"

Harry started shouting at Wormtail again.

"You're lying, that never happened. I would remember that! You're a filthy liar"

But Wormtail continued talking as if Harry had never interrupted.

"I snuck in to see Harry. The Dark Lord never lets me see Harry. He told me to stay with the lower rank Death Eaters and forbid me to ever try and see or speak to Harry, but I disobeyed him. I had decided to take Harry back home! I never wanted Harry to become a killer, never! I told Harry everything. He didn't want to believe it at first but then I showed him the true memories. Harry...Harry started crying. He didn't want to be with Lord Voldemort anymore. He wanted to come home! I was going to bring him home but...but...I..."

Suddenly Wormtail looked up and saw Harry standing looking at him. Without warning Wormtail lunged forward and grabbed onto Harry's hand. A sudden rush of memories flooded into Harry's mind and Harry felt himself being thrown into a stream of memories.

Harry saw himself as a small baby sitting in Sirius's lap, pulling his long dark hair. Sirius was laughing and making faces at him. Another

flash or memory and Harry found the smiling faces of James and Lily looking down at a one year old Harry, planting small kisses on his face and forehead. Another memory, Harry saw Wormtail holding him, wrapped up in a blanket. Wormtail was hardly recognisable. He had a head full of sandy coloured hair and was quite plump looking. He held Harry close as he sped downstairs and went outside the front door.

Harry tried to pull away from these memories but found himself being so forcefully held that he couldn't tear himself away. He saw another flash and saw Lord Voldemort standing in front of Bella who was holding a small bundle in her arms. 'Avada Kedavra'. The words left Lord Voldemort's mouth as Harry saw the jet of green light speed towards the bundle in Bella's arms. Suddenly the green light from the killing curse missed Harry and hit the ground, making the surrounding area turn green for a moment before becoming normal again. Lord Voldemort approached Bella and roughly pulled the small child out of the blankets. Harry saw his one year old self tremble in the cold air.

"I have changed my mind. He will live. He will be brought up to obey my every command. The child destined to kill me will kill on my command. The wizarding world's saviour will be the one who will destroy them. He will be the key to my immortality!" Lord Voldemort spoke the words clearly and then threw the young child at Bella who thankfully caught him. Harry watched as other flashes of memory zoomed in front of Harry's eyes but they were too fast to make out suddenly he saw his own self, around the age of ten, running with Wormtail. Harry recognised the halls as those of Riddle Manor. Another flash later, Wormtail was on the ground twitching and screaming in pain while Harry was being restrained by Malfoy. Lord Voldemort came over to Harry's struggling form and ran his finger gently down Harry's cheek, almost lovingly.

"Don't worry son, you won't remember any of this. Everything will go back to the way it was."

The ten year old Harry jerked his head away from Voldemort's finger and glared at him through tear filled eyes.

"You can wipe my memories away today, but you'll get caught out. I will learn your truth again one day and when I do you'll never be able

Harry didn't know how he got there but he found himself standing in front of the Potter Manor again. Harry needed to find out what the truth was. Those memories he had seen couldn't possibly be true. Harry didn't even know what he was looking for, maybe something to prove that the Potters really didn't care about Harry. Harry crept quietly in the house. A quick scanning spell showed that no one was home. Harry opened the back door with an 'Alohomora' spell and walked in.

Harry went straight to the bedrooms on the second landing. Harry remembered where he used to sleep. It was the tiny attic. It used to be so cold that the four year old wouldn't be able to sleep at nights. Before Harry could go towards the attic he walked by the master bedroom. Harry felt a significant amount of magical energy coming from the bedroom. Harry stopped in his tracks and stood facing the bedroom door. Why was there so much magic hidden in that room? Maybe it had something to do with Harry. Harry remembered that Damien had said that his parents had kept Harry a secret from him. Maybe this is where they had hidden everything about Harry. They surely wouldn't have kept the attic in the same state it was. They would have cleared it all up. Maybe there was something in the bedroom. Harry could tell by the magical aura, that the spells used where to conceal or hide things.

Harry walked into the master bedroom. The room was quite large and was neatly decorated. Harry didn't bother looking at the photographs on the bedside table. Harry was drawn to the source of the strong magic. It seemed to be coming from the far wall. Harry walked over to the wall and placed a hand on it. The wall felt solid but Harry knew that it wasn't really there. Harry took out his wand and used the 'finite incantateum' spell to finish the illusion. It didn't work. Harry looked at the wall again, confused for a moment as to how to remove this illusion so that he could see what was hidden behind it.

Harry used another spell. It was much stronger than the 'finite incantateum' spell.

“FINITE TRESPASSTRAIN”

At once the creamy white wall began to dissolve away and Harry was looking at a huge space that was concealed behind this wall. There were boxes stacked away neatly and there must have been around twenty to thirty boxes. Harry quickly opened the nearest box. It was full of things from James and Lily's Hogwarts years. There were badges, award certificates and all sorts of other things. Harry could feel the tension headache build in his head. He quickly pushed that box aside and went for the next one. It again was full of what Harry considered junk. It wasn't until Harry pulled out one of the boxes near the bottom that he saw something that was to do with him.

Harry opened the box and it was filled with baby clothes. Harry looked at the tiny clothes and thought that they must be Damien's. They looked really expensive and hardly worn. That was when Harry noticed several items had the letters 'HP' embroidered on them. Harry sat stock still as he looked at the clothes. Why would they keep his baby clothes? They hated him!

Harry quickly pulled another box out and what he saw in this box made his heart leap out of his chest. The box was stacked full of wrapped up presents. Harry picked one up and saw the gift tag on it. It read,

'Happy 3rd Birthday, Harry'

Harry felt like the wind had been knocked out of him. He quickly pulled out the presents in this box and saw that all of them had been wrapped up and were addressed to him. The gifts were still wrapped up and had messages attached to them, all reading things like 'Happy Birthday, Harry...Merry Christmas, Harry' Harry held a big parcel in his trembling hands and saw that this one had a gift tag reading 'Happy 2nd Birthday, Harry, we miss you so much' Harry dropped the present. It went clattering to the floor. Harry couldn't believe it. Three of these storage boxes had nothing but Harry's presents in them. They were Birthday and Christmas gifts and there were fifteen presents each. Harry realised that the Potters had bought him a Christmas gift for last Christmas as well, even after what Harry had done to James. Harry realised with a sick jolt that if there were presents here for Harry from the age of two, then that proved that Harry was taken away from the Potters at the age of around fifteen

months. The memories Harry had of the Potters, the abuse, running away at the age of four. They were all lies!

The last box Harry opened proved to Harry that he had been lied to his whole life. The box held photograph albums. Harry opened a large maroon coloured album and saw the pages filled with magical pictures of a small, messy haired, green eyed baby being cuddled and kissed by his parents. Harry looked at the pictures with tears falling down his face. Tears he hadn't even realised he was shedding.

One particular picture made Harry stop and stare. It was a picture of James throwing a baby Harry into the air and then catching him again. The baby Harry was laughing heartily and James would kiss the baby's nose after each throw. Harry felt his heart constrict painfully as he saw the pictures. Another picture was of a sleeping baby Harry in his crib and both James and Lily crouching over him and whispering loving and comforting words. Harry read Lily's lips and saw that she was in fact whispering a protective spell on him, so that no one could cause any harm to him. It was a well known spell and Harry could easily recognise the spell.

Other pictures were of Sirius holding Harry and playing with him. Remus was also there and Harry saw that the baby Harry seemed to be very responsive to Sirius and Remus. Harry hadn't even exchanged two words with Remus yet. Harry saw a photo on the last page. It was of James and Lily holding baby Harry and waving at the camera. James and Lily would share a kiss before waving at the camera again. Without really thinking why, Harry reached over and slipped the photograph out of the album and placed it into his robes pocket. Harry roughly pushed the hidden items into the boxes and cast the concealment charm again so that no one would be able to tell that Harry had been here.

Harry got up and silently walked away from Godric's Hollow. He needed answers and he needed them now!

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Harry came storming into the Riddle Manor. He went straight to his father's chambers. Harry knew that it was not a good idea to be confronting Lord Voldemort at a time like this, when Harry was barely

restraining his temper, but Harry had long before lost the fear of consequences. Harry needed to know the truth. As soon as Harry opened the doors and walked in he realised that Lord Voldemort was not in the chambers. Harry remembered that Lord Voldemort was due to be meeting some people today. He was not going to be back until nightfall.

Harry stormed back out and raced to find Bella. Harry entered Bella's room and saw her sitting at her desk. Harry had not even thought about how he was going to get the truth from her. He barged in and stood before Bella, emerald eyes burning with rage, fists curled tightly into balls. Bella stood up immediately from her desk and raced over to Harry.

"Harry! What happened? Why are you so upset? What happened?" Bella asked as she approached him.

Harry continued to stare at Bella, unable to speak due to the rage he felt.

"How long?" Harry managed to say through clenched teeth.

"What?" Bella asked confused by Harry's question.

"How long did you expect me to believe your lies!" Harry asked. Bella stepped away from him.

"Harry! What are you talking about?" Bella tried to ask him.

"You know exactly what I'm talking about! You were there! I saw you with him. Both of you lied to me!"

Harry remembered how Lord Voldemort had thrown the one year old Harry towards Bella. Although Bella had caught the child, she didn't seem very concerned with the child's well being. Bella had held onto Harry while Lord Voldemort had cast the killing curse on him. She was apparently there when Lord Voldemort had made a ten year old Harry kill a Death Eater, when Harry didn't want to kill him.

Bella stood in front of Harry, mind reeling from Harry's words. 'He couldn't have found out, it's not possible' she thought desperately to herself.

"Who was it?" Harry asked in a quiet but deadly voice.

"Who?" Bella repeated, again confused with Harry's question.

"The ones who hurt me. The ones who disguised themselves as the Potters! I know the memories are real. I can feel them. They're not fake! So tell me who was it?" Harry asked again.

Bella seemed unable to speak as she tried to fight the battle going on within her.

"TELL ME!" Harry bellowed and raised his wand at her.

Harry never meant for it to happen, but with his rage building within him and the command he shouted at Bella, it caused the true memories of Harry's abuse to be revealed. Harry staggered backwards as his mind was once again filled with someone else's memories. Harry saw quick flashes of the true memories. Harry saw himself as a three year old running into the kitchen at Godric's hollow, but instead of James and Lily, it was Lord Voldemort and Bella sitting at the table. It was Lord Voldemort who had slapped the three year old Harry. It was Lord Voldemort who had taken off his belt and mercilessly beaten Harry when he was four years old. Harry saw Lucius appear in the doorway of the kitchen pretending to be Sirius. Harry tore the memories away from himself. But not before seeing the last image of Lord Voldemort holding Harry's hand down on that burning hot oven.

Harry looked at Bella who looked surprised herself that she couldn't stop the memories flowing to him. The raven haired boy stood silently for a moment, unable to move. His entire life had been a lie. Bella's memories had shown the truth behind Harry's abuse. They had done the abuse and then altered the memories to look like James, Lily and Sirius. Harry or anyone else could not tell the memories were altered since they were done at such an early age of Harry's life that his mind had made them real. No one looking at Harry's memories could see

the alterations or the signs that these memories had been modified. Bella however remembered everything as it was.

Harry gripped his wand tightly and tried to get his befuddled mind to work. He didn't know what to do! Harry turned around and stormed out of the room.

"Harry! Harry. No wait I can explain" Bella called after him. She ran to the door and took out her wand. She knew this was the only way to stop Harry from leaving them.

"OBLIVATE" she shouted as she pointed her wand at Harry's back.

Harry felt the spell zoom towards him. He brought up his shield just in time. The shimmering blue bubble that surrounded Harry absorbed the 'obliviate' spell. Harry swung around and cast an 'expellamus' spell at Bella, successfully disarming her. Bella stood in front of Harry, defenceless. She was certain that Harry was going to kill her. Harry, however, turned and walked away from her. He was heading for the outside doors.

"Harry! No! Harry!" Bella screamed.

"STOP HIM!" Bella shouted at the Death Eaters standing near the door.

The Death Eaters looked at Bella and then at Harry, as though confused if this was a prank of some sort. When Bella shouted at them again they realised that something was really wrong. They tried to stop Harry but Harry just waved his hand, and the three Death Eaters went flying in the opposite direction.

Bella watched as Harry went out of the open doors and disappeared.

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Harry went racing back to the cave that held Wormtail. Harry felt no loyalty towards the filthy man. He was the reason that Harry's life had been destroyed. He took Harry away from his rightful parents. He took Harry to Lord Voldemort. He was the one responsible for Harry growing up without a childhood. He was the one who stood by and

watched the son of his friend being abused and turned into a killer. Harry angrily wiped his eyes as he thought about the fake love Lord Voldemort and Bella had shown him. All that time they had just been using Harry. They never loved him. They hurt him when he was a child. Starved him, beat him, and made him think he was worthless. They did all that so that they could mould him into becoming a killer.

Harry approached the mouth of the cave and saw that the protective spell had still not been replaced. Harry felt dread creep into him again. He had left Malfoy with Wormtail! Harry raced to the small cell holding Wormtail. As soon as Harry entered the cell he knew he was too late. Wormtail was dead and Malfoy was gone. Harry stood over the body of Wormtail. Harry hated this man with every fibre of his being but seeing the punishment he had lived through made Harry feel that he had gotten what he deserved. This man had betrayed his friends, gambled with an innocent life. In return he got imprisonment in the worst place ever. Harry realised that Wormtail had only been here for the last six years as he had said himself that he was captured while trying to get Harry home. Lord Voldemort must have decided that this was a worse punishment than death and so imprisoned him here. How this man survived six years was a mystery to Harry.

Harry walked away from the cave and slowly made his way from the woods. He was lost. Harry had nowhere to go. He couldn't go back to his parents. As much as Harry wanted to go and make things right with the Potters, Harry knew that he wouldn't be given the chance. The Ministry wouldn't give Harry a chance to explain. And even if they did what would Harry say! And why should they believe him. Harry had betrayed them all when he escaped from Hogwarts. The attack on Hogwarts Express was also something that had made things worse for Harry. The Ministry was after Harry for many things but the one thing they were adamant about making Harry pay for was the Longbottom deaths. Harry could easily bring them Frank and Alice back. Their memories would be able to be brought back, since Harry had not obliterated them but locked their own memories by very powerful memory charms. But Harry couldn't do that. He couldn't risk their lives again. Lord Voldemort would send someone after them as soon as he learned that Harry had not completed that assignment. What about Nigel! Harry couldn't have anyone hurting them. No, Harry would have to keep quiet about them. The Longbottom's were

enjoying their lives as John and Fiona. They should be kept out of this mess.

Harry would never go back to Lord Voldemort. Harry would rather be caught by the Ministry than to go back to him. Harry knew what would happen to him. Just like before he would have his mind wiped clean except for the things Lord Voldemort wanted him to remember. Harry wouldn't let himself be manipulated like that again. Harry didn't realise that night had fallen and he was still walking towards nowhere. He didn't know what to do. Even going to Dumbledore as not an option anymore. No one would help him now. Harry didn't want them getting mixed up with the Ministry as well. Minister Fudge would happily throw many people into Azkaban, for helping Harry.

Harry never realised that he had come away from the woods and was now walking along a darkened path. Harry only became aware that something was wrong when he felt a spell being whispered. Instinctively Harry brought up his shield. It was just in time, as another oblivate curse was sent towards Harry. The spell hit the shield and it instantly died away. Harry stood still as he saw many figures, dressed in black robes appear all around him. They had surrounded him. Harry looked at the masked man and felt his blood boil with rage.

Harry saw that only two figures weren't wearing their white masks. Harry glared at Bella and Malfoy. Bella was looking at Harry with an almost regretful look in her eyes. Malfoy however was looking at Harry with rage.

"Come Prince! You have to come back home with us!" Malfoy said in a strong voice. Harry saw that all ten Death Eaters had their wands trained on him. Harry also had his shield ready, in case another oblivate spell came at him.

"Home? I don't have a home, Malfoy. Thanks to you!" Harry spat back at him.

"Harry, you can't believe what that rat, Wormtail told you. He was insane. He tried to hurt you when you were younger, that's why he was imprisoned..." Malfoy stopped talking when Harry erupted in shouts.

“STOP IT! STOP LYING TO ME!”

“We’re not lying! Stop this childish behaviour and come home. The Dark Lord will be home by now and he would want to speak to you” Malfoy continued in his harsh tone.

“I’m never going back to him!” Harry replied venomously.

“Harry! Please, what do you think will happen if you act like this? Being stubborn is not going to get you anywhere. Do you really think the Dark Lord will let you walk away! Please come home. Everything will go back to normal! You’ll see” Bella said in an urgent tone.

“Back to normal? What is normal, Bella? How many times are you going to wipe my mind clean so that you can go back to filling my head with lies?”

“Stop this! You’re acting like a child! Have we not looked after you? Have we not cared for you all these years? The Dark Lord allowed you to live, he made you strong. You can’t repay him by running away from him and leaving him in a time of war!” Bella said in anger.

“Looked after me? Cared for me? Oh! Yes, you have done that. But you did it out of greed. You needed to care for me so that I would remain loyal to you. I was allowed to live, so that I would kill for you. He made me stronger so that I would weaken his enemies. Voldemort didn’t do anything for me. He only used me to serve his purpose!” Harry said.

“What am I supposed to say to him? What do I say to explain your absence?” Bella asked angrily.

Harry looked at Bella for a moment before answering.

“Tell him, I’m through! I’m not his puppet anymore”

With that said Harry reached over and pulled the silver pendant around his neck. He pulled the chain off and held the Horcrux in his hand for a moment before throwing it into the air. The shocked Death Eaters watched as Harry threw the Horcrux into the air. Harry’s emerald green eyes turned black for a second as he concentrated at

the flying pendant. Suddenly the Horcrux burst into flames. Bella and Malfoy screamed out in horror. The flames licked at the Horcrux before the entire thing exploded into dust.

Bella and Malfoy both turned their fury filled eyes towards Harry, only to find that the raven haired boy had disappeared.

[illegible]

Chapter Thirty Seven

It was a day that Lord Voldemort had hoped would never come. He had always feared that the truth might make itself known to Harry. Lord Voldemort had always pacified his own fears by deciding that if Harry was ever to learn the truth, he would simply oblivate his mind and start over. Lord Voldemort knew that if too much time went by then the memories would be harder to oblivate, but memory charms could be used to make Harry forget.

What Lord Voldemort hadn't taken into account was the emotions that would arise within him at the thought of Harry abandoning him. When Lucius and Bella had reported back the happening of the day, Lord Voldemort had been extremely upset. But the moment he lost all endurance was when the image of Harry destroying his Horcrux had come into Lord Voldemort's mind. Seeing one seventh of his soul being destroyed and by none other than his own Harry, was something Lord Voldemort would always remember.

At the present time, Lord Voldemort was standing in the midst of his followers. His hand holding his wand was trembling as Lord Voldemort struggled to calm the rage building within him, so that he could give out instructions to his Death Eaters. It was their fault that Harry found out the truth. How could Malfoy not realise that someone was following him? Why did they not successfully oblivate Harry and bring him back home?

Harry had destroyed the Horcrux that Lord Voldemort had given to him with so much trust. Harry would pay for his insolence.

"Bring him back to me" Lord Voldemort commanded.

The Death Eaters bowed their heads and their voices rang out as one.

"Yes master"

"Understand this, I want Harry back alive!" Lord Voldemort commanded.

At these words, the surrounding Death Eaters looked at each other in confusion. Some figured that maybe Lord Voldemort wanted to kill the

traitor by his own hands. The Death Eaters filed out of the chamber. Only two Death Eaters remained behind. When they were left alone, one of the Death Eaters spoke out.

“Master, you want him back alive? I don’t understand”

Bella’s voice sounded worried and heavy. Bella was heart broken at Harry’s betrayal, but she belonged to Lord Voldemort. She could never disobey his direct command. Bella had been hoping that by some miracle, Lord Voldemort might spare Harry’s life. Maybe if she got Harry back, the Dark Lord would be contented with wiping his memory clean. That way Bella could remain her master’s loyal servant and have Harry with her again.

“Yes, Bella. I want him back alive. I have spent too much time and effort into raising him, making him stronger. I won’t throw all of that away so easily. Harry will be brought back to me. He will have his memory modified so that everything can go back to being normal again.”

At this revelation, Lucius cleared his throat to speak. His throat was still hurting from all the screaming he had done earlier. The Dark Lord had punished the senior Malfoy for his failure to notice that Harry was following him and for his failure to bring Harry back to the Manor. It was while he was convulsing in sheer agony, under the crucio curse, that the memory of Harry destroying the Horcrux had been brought out by Lord Voldemort. Needless to say the pain Malfoy had felt as the torture curse was intensified, was enough to make Malfoy spiral into unconsciousness. He had been brought back to consciousness by Bella, who had also been punished by the Dark Lord for the first time in front of Lucius.

“A thousand pardons my Lord, but, what about Harry’s impertinence with destroying your possession”

Malfoy flinched at the dangerous look Lord Voldemort had thrown his way. He mentally berated himself for speaking out loud. However, Lord Voldemort didn’t throw any curses his way.

“Harry will be punished accordingly. After he has served his punishment he will have his memory erased and modified. I need him

in this war. I will not tolerate Dumbledore getting his hands on him. Bring me Harry! And bring him back to me soon or else prepare for your painful departure from this world!"

Lord Voldemort left the speechless and petrified Death Eaters standing as he walked out of the chamber.

xx

Harry had apparated back into those woods. He didn't know how he had managed to wandlessly destroy that Horcrux. He had felt an amazing amount of magic build inside him along with his rage. He had thrown that Horcrux at the Death Eaters and at once he had willed that Horcrux to turn to dust. He wanted that Horcrux destroyed. Harry had figured that somehow, his powers must have caused the Horcrux to burst into flames and then turn to dust.

Harry walked aimlessly further into the woods. He had no idea where he was. Harry saw a small opening in a dark cave. Harry dragged himself to the cave and sat just at the mouth of the cave. The air was cold and Harry only just realised that he was shivering from head to foot. Harry's mind was still swimming with all that had happened to him today.

His entire life had been one huge lie. Lord Voldemort wanted to kill him when he was only fifteen months old. Bella and Lucius had been involved in all the lies as well. They had never cared for Harry. They had put him through tough training regimes, taught him dark curses and made him kill at the age of ten. Harry put his head into his hands as he bit back the emotions that surged through him. 'How could I have been so stupid?' he bitterly thought to himself. 'The most feared wizard in the world who takes life so easily, the wizard whose name most can't even say due to fear! I believed he was a loving father! He was someone who would protect me' Harry thought to himself. He knew that it wasn't really his fault. He had grown up in the midst of lies. He couldn't really be expected to see through Lord Voldemort's mind games and lies, but Harry was at a point where his fragile mind was ready to snap. He had to blame someone, why not himself.

Harry thought about the Potters again. He remembered the photos and presents that he had found. Harry slipped the photo out from his

robes and looked at the smiling faces of the Potters. James and Lily Potter. His parents! Harry looked at the faces of the two people he had grown up hating. The innocent people made out to be monsters. They had loved Harry. Even after Harry left them at Hogwarts, even after Harry had tried to kill James! They still continued to love him. Harry shuddered as he thought about what would have happened if Sirius hadn't saved James that day on the cliff. Harry would have killed James Potter, his own father, for no reason. Harry put the photo back into his pocket. He had to figure what he could do. Where could he go?

Harry knew that he couldn't go to Godric's Hollow. Even though he was certain his parents would take him back, Harry wasn't sure he would be able to even look at them in the eye. After everything Harry had said and done to them. It was too much. The other reason Harry couldn't go to them was that he knew James and Lily would try and protect him from the Ministry. Harry knew that the Ministry would find out and would take Harry away. Harry didn't want to go to Azkaban, not yet anyway. His parents would get into trouble with the Ministry for trying to help Harry. No, that wasn't an option. Harry didn't want the Potters to go through any more difficulty than they were going through already because of him.

Harry wasn't going to go to Dumbledore or the Order. Whatever had happened, to open Harry's eyes, Harry still hated the Order and the Ministry. They had given up on Harry fifteen years ago, when he was taken by Wormtail. Why should Harry do anything for them!

Just as these thoughts were going through Harry's mind, Harry's scar erupted in pain. Harry had been mentally preparing himself for this. He knew the rage Voldemort was going to feel once he learned about Harry's disappearance. The pain wasn't as bad as it had been when Harry had the Horcrux around his neck. Harry remembered Bella's theory about his scar hurting because of the Horcrux being so near him. 'I guess she was truthful about one thing' Harry thought bitterly to himself.

Suddenly the pain intensified, so much so that Harry let out a muffled cry and fell to the ground in agony. His head was going to explode with pain. Harry knew that this pain was because Voldemort had

found out that Harry had destroyed the Horcrux. Even though the pain was intense and Harry was crying out painfully, he never regretted his actions. 'I would do it again in a heartbeat' Harry thought as he spiralled into unconsciousness.

xx

James and Lily walked out of the fireplace at the Order headquarters. They brushed off the soot from their robes and looked around. Dumbledore had called an emergency meeting at 9pm. 'What happened now!' thought Lily worriedly as she quickly made her way over to the living room. Damien had already been sent to the burrow that morning. He was staying with the Weasley family for the next couple of days. Hermione Granger was also there and was planning on making the boys work hard on their study assignments. James and Lily had spent the entire day with the Weasleys as well. In fact James and Lily had just arrived home about an hour ago when they got the emergency meeting message.

Lily prayed that nothing bad had happened. But she knew that Dumbledore would never call a meeting this late in the evening if there wasn't something big happening. However Lily had no idea just how big of an event had taken place earlier that day.

Lily saw that many of the Order members had not arrived as of yet. The only people in the living room at the moment were, Dumbledore, Snape, Remus and Sirius. James and Lily sat down next to Dumbledore.

"Where is everybody?" Lily asked as she sat down.

"They'll be here soon" Dumbledore answered.

"I asked you to come a little earlier than the rest. I think you should hear this first" Dumbledore continued.

Lily felt her heart sink as she heard Dumbledore's words. This had to be something bad about Harry. It just had to be. James and Lily held their breath and looked at Dumbledore, urging him to tell them what had happened with their eyes.

“The hour is late but the information that I have received has to be shared immediately”

Dumbledore looked directly at James and Lily as he spoke the next words.

“It’s happened. Harry has left Voldemort for good”

James heard the words leave Dumbledore’s mouth, but didn’t quite believe them. He felt Lily grab onto his hand and he was aware of Sirius and Remus’s reactions as well, but James himself couldn’t quite believe what Dumbledore said was in fact true.

“What?” the question came out of James’s mouth as nothing more than a whisper.

“I only received this news an hour ago. Severus came to see me and reported that Harry had been away from Voldemort’s manor for the whole day. When he did return he went to see Bella in her room. After what seemed like a heated argument Harry left the manor in a towering rage. Severus said that he was told by other Death Eaters that many of them had been blasted away from the door by Harry. It seemed Bella was trying to stop Harry leaving but Harry wouldn’t listen to her. A short while later, Severus and many other Death Eaters were instructed by Bella to follow her and Lucius. They were told to surround Harry but not to harm him.”

Dumbledore stopped here to look at Snape. The greasy haired wizard was sitting quietly. He seemed to be observing the Potters reactions to Dumbledore’s words.

“When they did find Harry, he refused to go with Bella and Lucius. From the conversation that took place it sounds like Harry met someone who told Harry the truth about his childhood, the truth about how and when he was taken from Godric’s Hollow. Harry escaped and the Death Eaters were forced to go back to Voldemort empty handed.” Dumbledore finished.

James felt like his heart was going to burst. He was feeling a number of emotions at the moment. The joy at hearing that Harry had finally left that monster was overwhelming as was the happiness that Harry

had learned the truth about his childhood. That is wasn't his parents that had hurt him when he was a child. But at the same time, James felt a huge amount of worry and anxiety at Harry's whereabouts. Where was Harry going to go? Surely Harry would come back home to Godric's Hollow. He knew the truth about them, then why would Harry not come home? James also felt true fear for his son now. Would the Ministry give Harry a chance to explain? Would they allow him a second chance to live a life that he should have had in the first place?

"Harry is now in an even more vulnerable place than before. Not only is the Ministry and the Order after him, but now Voldemort and his Death Eaters will also be after him. It is now imperative that we find Harry and keep him safe from both Voldemort and the Ministry. Once Harry is with us, we can sort out something with the Minister. But I'm afraid that just now, Minister Fudge is not willing to listen to a single word that I have to say" Dumbledore said quietly.

"I know that this is hard for both of you, for all of you. But please don't see this as a set back. This is a wonderful thing, Harry has learnt the truth. He will no longer be used by Voldemort. Once Harry is back with us, we can sort out all other issues. We just have to get to him before anybody else does" Dumbledore spoke directly to James and Lily. Remus and Sirius sat quietly as well, trying to digest this information.

"Who...who was it? The person who told Harry the truth. Do you know who it was?" James asked quietly.

Dumbledore looked at James for a moment before answering.

"It was Peter Pettigrew"

At once all four heads snapped up.

"Peter!" Sirius spat the name as if it were plagued.

"Yes, Sirius, it was Peter who told Harry the truth. Where and how he convinced Harry of the truth, I don't know. But according to a comment made by Lucius, Wormtail had spoken with Harry." Dumbledore replied.

Snape sat quietly as the rest talked and discussed Harry. Snape wasn't even sure why he was sitting at this table. Dumbledore was doing a fine job in retelling Snape's findings. But Snape knew that once the meeting was officially started, his memories would be used to show to the Order members.

Shortly the members of the Order arrived and Snape's memories were used to show the confrontation between Harry and Lucius. When the Order saw Harry remove the Horcrux and destroy it, there were some very audible gasps. James and Lily sat motionless as they saw their son looking devastated and completely broken. They could see the anger and hurt shining in his eyes as he looked at Bella. They could see the shaking of his hands as he threw the Horcrux in the air. Harry didn't know what he was doing. He was too distraught. That much was visible. James knew that Harry's world had come crashing down around him. James wished that he could find Harry. He wanted to comfort his son. He wanted to make Harry feel safe, something that Harry hadn't felt for some time now.

At the end of the meeting, the reactions were pretty much predictable. Some Order members were ready to look for Harry, to capture him for the Order. Others, like Alastor Moody, were convinced that the memory was nothing more than a trick by Harry and Bella. A trick to make it seem that Harry had rebelled, so as to confuse the Aurors.

"Come on Albus, can't you see through this charade! Harry was convinced that there was a spy in Voldemort's ranks. He didn't trust Snape! That much was obvious when he was at Hogwarts. Don't you think that maybe, they pulled this trick in front of Snape so that he would go back to report to you, and you will order Harry not to be hurt, but captured without harm. It would mean that the Aurors would be arresting Harry and not trying to kill him. It would also mean that Harry could double cross us again like he did last time when he was at Hogwarts." Moody said loudly.

"Alastor, I think you're over analysing this. Harry would have no reason to fear the Aurors. Voldemort has been given a sentence similar to Harry. 'The kiss upon capture' Yet Voldemort doesn't bother to hide himself or stop his reign of terror. Harry doesn't fear this

sentence. Whatever you have seen in Snape's memory if true" Dumbledore tried to convince Moody.

In the end many Order members agreed with Moody. Others were uncertain if this was a trick to get to the Aurors and avoid the 'Kiss' or if it was genuine that Harry had left Voldemort. James and Sirius had literally fought Moody out of the headquarters because of his hurtful words.

The only thing that was in the three marauders minds was to find Harry, before anybody else does.

xx

It had been three days since Harry's rebellion against Voldemort and still there was no sign of him. Snape had reported that the Death Eaters were having no luck in capturing Harry either. There was no sign of him. It was as if Harry had simply disappeared from their world.

James and Lily were getting more and more agitated with everyone around them. They couldn't understand where Harry could have gone. Why hadn't he come home to them? They had decided to tell Damien everything. Ever since the pensive incident, James and Lily took the chance to explain everything to Damien.

"He hasn't contacted you at all?" James had asked Damien every day.

"No, dad! If he does I promise I'll tell you, okay!" Damien would reply in an agitated tone.

It was around 6pm on the fourth night after the last Order meeting, and all three Potters were at Godric's Hollow. Damien was sitting with all the study work that Hermione had given to him the day before. Lily was busy preparing dinner and James was left talking to Sirius about what their next step should be at finding Harry.

Suddenly the phone rang and Sirius jumped at the ringing sound.

"Merlin! Lily, why do you insist on having that heart-attack-causing-machine in this house?" Sirius asked as he massaged his chest where his heart was.

"It's only a telephone, Padfoot" Lily replied from the kitchen.

"James, please get that for me" Lily shouted as she continued to prepare food.

"What for? You know the only person who uses that stupid thing is your sister. She'll probably go into a fit if I answer the phone" James replied.

It was true. The only reason the Potters had a muggle phone in their house was because Lily's sister, Petunia, had sworn that she would never contact her using the magical way. If Lily wanted to speak to Petunia or if she wanted Petunia to keep in contact with her then she would have to get a telephone. Lily had agreed only to have peace and quiet. Petunia was a pain but she was her only sister. After Lily's parents had died they had made Lily promise that she would look after her sister. Lily thought that if nothing else that it was nice to phone and find out if everything was okay with her sister Petunia Dursley.

It was rather odd that Petunia was calling her at this time in the year. The only time Lily got a phone call from Petunia was around Christmas or Dudley's birthday. Since March wasn't the time for either, Lily was surprised at the phone call.

"Just answer the thing!" Lily said rather annoyed.

"Alright" James sighed as he got up from the table and moved towards the phone.

"If it's Hermione, tell her I'm almost done!" Damien shouted over at his father.

"Yes sir" James mocked as he reached over to answer the ringing phone.

"Hello, Potters residence" James said as he picked up the receiver.

There was no answer. James listened for a reply but no one spoke. It was clear that someone was on the other end as James could hear the sound of traffic in the distance.

“Hello? Hello?” James repeated looking confusedly at the phone. He knew he was answering the phone in the correct manner, as it was demonstrated to him by Lily and in all honesty, it wasn’t that difficult.

“Hello, is anybody there?” James asked again, a little annoyed now.

“Who is it?” Lily asked from the kitchen.

“Don’t know, there’s no answer” James replied.

James was just about to hang up the phone when he heard a response on the other end. It was a sound that he never thought he would hear, not like this anyway.

“Dad”

James felt his heart stop as he heard the word been spoken. It was said very quietly and James could feel the pain in the voice. James clung onto the phone, his heart was thumping heavily in his chest.

“Harry?” James whispered, unable to make his voice louder. After a moments pause, Harry answered.

“Yeah, it’s me”

James felt his knees buckle as he heard his son’s voice. He sounded so tired, so exhausted. James wanted to say so many things. He wanted to ask if Harry was okay, where he was, how he was, but all James could manage was a question in a weak voice.

“Harry! Are you alright?”

Harry took a moment to answer again. He seemed to be unsure of his words.

“I’m...I’m okay. I just wanted to say that...that I’m, I’m sorry!”

James was startled for a moment. Sorry! Sorry for what. Why was Harry apologising? He hadn’t done anything wrong. It wasn’t his fault that he was taken by Wormtail so many years ago. It was James’s fault for allowing Wormtail to come into his home and to take Harry

away from them. Before James could ask why Harry was apologising, Harry spoke again.

“I should have given you a chance. I...I should have listened to you. I’m sorry that I never gave you a chance. I’m sorry for everything! Everything I said and did to you”

James understood what Harry was talking about. Harry was feeling guilty over the incident on the cliff. Harry had tried to kill James. If Sirius hadn’t saved him, James would have died that day. ‘That’s probably why Harry never came home. He’s too ashamed!’ James thought to himself. In all honesty, James had completely forgotten about that incident. After learning the content of Harry’s pensive and then the search of ‘Alex’ and the discovery of the Longbottoms, James had completely forgotten what had happened between Harry and himself that day on the cliff.

“Harry, listen to me. You don’t have to be sorry. I don’t blame you. You didn’t know the truth” James tried to comfort Harry.

Harry didn’t respond but from the sound of Harry’s breathing, James could tell that Harry was breaking down.

“Harry, where are you? Tell me where you are and I’ll come to get you” James said urgently. At this point Sirius, Lily and Damien were crowded around him. They had heard James say the name ‘Harry’ and had rushed towards James to listen to the conversation.

“No” Harry responded quietly but defiantly.

“Harry, please you don’t understand. You are in danger! You have to let me help you” James said desperately.

“You can’t help me” Harry replied. His voice was a lot stronger now, but James could feel the hurt in the tone Harry was speaking in.

“I don’t want you to get into more trouble. I can’t just come home and hope that everyone will leave me alone. It won’t work like that! If I come home, the Ministry will take over and want you to hand me over to them” Harry said quietly.

“And you think that I’ll do that?” James asked.

“You won’t have a choice. If you don’t, they’ll throw you into Azkaban as well. You can’t get involved. Damien needs you. M-mum needs you!”

James felt his heart leap painfully again as Harry called Lily ‘mum’

“Harry...” James stared but Harry cut him off.

“I just called so that I could say sorry. If there was any other way, I would come home in a heartbeat. But I gave up my chance when I ran away from Hogwarts. No one will give me another chance. No matter what you tell them”

“Harry! No! You misunderstand. You will get another chance! Harry, please just tell me where are you. You need to stay safe Harry. Everyone is out looking for you. You can’t beat the Death Eaters and the Aurors!” James tried desperately to convince Harry in letting James help him.

“Don’t worry, dad. I’m very good at hiding” Harry said and James could imagine the sad smile on Harry’s face.

“Harry, don’t do this. Please!” James begged.

“Goodbye, dad. Don’t put yourself into more trouble because of me”

“Harry, No! Don’t...” James stopped talking as he heard the sound of the phone being disconnected.

James let go of the receiver and stood staring at the phone.

“James! What happened? What did Harry say? Where is he? How is he? James! Answer me!” Lily shouted as she tried to get answers from him.

“Prongs?” Sirius asked as James collapsed onto the sofa.

James looked at the three pale faces staring at him. It took him nearly twenty minutes to repeat his conversation with Harry. At the end of which, all of them were in tears.

“He can’t just hide! Where is he going to go? Where is he going to sleep? How is he going to survive with no food? No! Harry can’t survive like this! You have to find him, James. We have to find him” cried a hysterical Lily.

“Well, at least we know one thing” Sirius said thoughtfully. The three Potters looked at Sirius.

“Harry’s not in the magical world. He’s in the muggle world. That’s why he used a muggle telephone to contact you. He knows that the magical communication systems would be heavily monitored. So he couldn’t take that risk. He must be in the muggle world” Sirius finished his explanation.

“But where did Harry get the money to make that phone call?” Damien asked.

“Good point! I think it’s time we went looking for ‘Alex’ again” Sirius said quietly.

xx

“I think you’ve gone bloody mad!” cried Draco as he looked at his friend intensely.

“Draco, there’s no other way” Harry replied calmly.

“Yes there is! Do what I’m saying. Get your ass out of here!” Draco said again.

Harry sighed and sat down. The two boys were standing in the small building that had been Harry and Draco’s favourite secret playing location. It was a good distance away from the Riddle and Malfoy manor and Harry was certain that no one knew about it. Harry had only stayed here for a few nights. He had already made arrangements to stay elsewhere. It was too dangerous for him to stay

in the magical world. At least in the muggle world, very few people recognised him.

Harry was shocked when he saw Draco appear here that afternoon. He had not thought that Draco would even be able to guess that Harry would come here.

"Listen, Harry! You can't stay here" Draco tried again.

"I know, I'm going to be leaving today." Harry replied as he absent-mindedly rubbed at his throbbing scar.

"No, I don't mean that. I mean you can't stay here! In this place any longer. You have to leave the country. Go away. Go anywhere, just as long as it is away from here"

"What would I gain from that? Voldemort would find me wherever I go, Draco. Leaving the country is not an option for me!" Harry said angrily. They had been discussing this point for the last hour now.

"So what are you going to do? Hide here for the rest of your life. Try and stay one step ahead of the Dark Lord! How long before someone catches you? If not a Death Eater then an Auror will catch you. Harry, mate, you've got to open your eyes. You're dead meat if you stay here. Father told me that the Dark Lord has some very nasty plans for you once he gets his hands on you" Draco said in a fearful voice.

"Well, he'll have to get his hands on me first!" Harry said in a bitter tone.

"Harry, what are you planning on doing for the rest of your life? Running away from him and the Ministry?" Draco asked the raven haired boy.

Harry looked at Draco, his emerald eyes locking with grey ones.

"*Life?* My life was taken away when I was ripped from my family, Draco. Voldemort took everything away from me, my childhood, my parents, my family, my future, my life! I'm going to take everything away from him. He took away what was important to me. Now, I'm going to take away the most important thing to him!"

Chapter Thirty Eight

The search for Alex was back on. James, Sirius and Remus were searching the muggle world extensively for any sign of Harry. Remus decided to speak to the Longbottoms. He was certain that they would have heard from Harry. As Remus walked over to the trailer he felt his heart thump wildly in his chest. Remus knocked on the door and waited patiently for someone to answer. Frank opened the door and looked sleepily at Remus.

“Yes, what can I do for you?” Frank asked while trying to rub sleep away from his eyes.

“Yes, hello. I’m so sorry for disturbing you this morning, but I was wondering if you could help me. I’m looking for a young man named Alex”

Frank stopped rubbing at his eyes and looked directly at Remus. A weird sort of fire had erupted in Frank’s eyes.

“Alex? Why are you looking for him?” he asked rather aggressively.

“I have heard a lot about his talent in the fight club. I was wondering if I could speak to him about a possible job opportunity that I may have for him.” Remus had thought this through.

“Since your club is the only one he seems to attend, I was wondering if you had any contact details I could have” Remus finished politely.

“Sorry, but no! Alex isn’t interested in doing this for a living. He only comes here sometimes to blow off some steam. I can’t give you any information on him. That’s strictly confidential. Now, if you don’t mind” Frank gestured for Remus to leave before slamming the door in his face.

Remus walked back to the waiting forms of Sirius and James.

“Well, any luck?” James asked as soon as Remus had joined them.

“Frank knows where Harry is. He just isn’t telling” Remus answered.

“Do you think Harry’s in there with the Longbottoms?” Sirius asked as he looked at the huge trailer.

“No, I don’t think so. But he definitely knows where Harry is. I could tell by the way he seemed to get worried about me asking about him.” Remus replied.

The three marauders left but made sure that they checked on the Longbottoms again. If ‘Alex’ was keeping in contact with them, then it was important to be here so that they could catch him.

xx

John went back to his bed. He had had a long night. The fight match last night had been such a success that it had kept John up late with all the tidying up afterwards. Alex had been nice enough to help him. John lay back in his bed, next to the sleeping form of Fiona. John thought back to a few days ago when Alex had turned up at his door.

Flashback

There was aloud knock on the door and Fiona went to open the door.

“Alex? Hi, what’s wrong?” Fiona asked as she extended her hand to help Alex inside.

John had been sitting with Nigel at the time, helping the child to go to sleep. He looked up and saw an exhausted looking Alex come inside.

“Alex? Are you okay?” John asked as he left the sleeping form of Nigel and walked over to Alex.

Alex was shivering and was soaked from head to foot. It looked like he had been caught in the heavy rain outside.

“Yeah, I’m fine. I just wanted a quick word with you. Sorry for coming unannounced” Alex said as he looked guiltily at the pool of water he was now standing in.

“Don’t be silly, you know you’re welcome here at any time” Fiona said as she pulled out a towel and handed it to Alex. Alex took the towel with trembling hands and attempted to dry his hair.

“What were you doing outside in weather like this?” John asked as he eyed Alex suspiciously.

John had always been very impressed with how cool and collected Alex always seemed to be. Even when the boy was in one of his fights, he never seemed to get nervous or unsure of whether he would win or not. Alex was the most confident person John knew. It surprised him that Alex was only nineteen years old. He seemed very confident for his age.

Yet today John noticed right away that Alex appeared different. It seemed as though Alex had lost that confidence somehow. His emerald eyes seemed clouded with pain and worry. His trembling hands also indicated that Alex was distressed over something. Even Alex’s voice sounded different.

“Um...I just got caught in the rain” Alex answered quietly as he continued to dry his soaking hair.

“You should really get out of those clothes. You’ll catch your death in those things!” Fiona said and hurried to find Alex something to wear.

The sad smile that flitted across Alex’s face was not missed by John. Something had definitely gone wrong for Alex.

“Alex? What happened? Is everything okay?” John asked again.

Alex didn’t answer right away and just nodded his head.

“Everything is fine. I just wanted to say that I’ll be attending the club tomorrow”

John was even more surprised at hearing this.

“But I thought that you said you were going to be really busy for awhile and wouldn’t be able to attend a fight” John answered.

“Yeah, but there’s been a change in my plans, is that okay?”

John looked at Alex. ‘Is this even the same boy?’ he thought to himself worriedly.

“Yeah, of course it is” John replied out loud.

“Um, there’s one more thing...” Alex looked away from John and seemed to struggle with his next words.

“The...the winnings. I want to know if...if I could...keep them this time. I need the money for something...” Alex trailed off and seemed to get embarrassed at his words.

“Alex, I’ve told you before. The winnings are yours. You earn them so you keep them. Wait here.” John instructed.

John went to one of the drawers and pulled out a small black paper book. He brought it over to Alex and handed him it.

“Here, this is yours”

Alex took the book and opened it carefully. It was a small book with printed numbers inside. Alex looked up at John, with a confused expression.

“It’s yours. I’ve been keeping your share of the winnings aside for you. I know you always said that you didn’t need the money and that I should just keep the whole lot but I knew that there might come a day when you do need the money. So I opened a separate account for you. This money is yours. You can do what you like with it. You can also have your share of the winnings for any match you play. I always said that you should save for a rainy day. This day was yours” John said as he pointed at Alex’s wet clothes.

Alex smiled at John’s terrible joke. He clutched onto the small book and looked at the figures printed in it. It was enough money to last him a while. He looked gratefully up at John.

“I...I don’t know what to say” Alex responded.

“Then don’t say anything” John joked.

Fiona came bustling in and handed Alex some dry clothes. It was a pair of jeans and a white shirt.

“Here, quickly change into these. Here’s a belt as well. You would never be able to wear John’s jeans otherwise.” She gave a cheeky smile at John and led Alex to a private room to change his clothes.

Alex left the John and Fiona a short while later. He was force fed some dinner by Fiona and as soon as the rain stopped, Alex took his leave.

End Flashback

John lay in his bed thinking about the fight Alex had put up the following night. It was a great night. John made more money that night than he usually did in a week. That was the miracle of Alex. The kid was just phenomenal. Even though Alex seemed to be fine when John spoke to him, John could feel that something wasn’t right. It was as if Alex had been through some sort of trauma. He wasn’t his usual self. But no matter how much he and Fiona pushed him to talk, Alex would just close up and insist that nothing was wrong.

The arrival of that man today, asking for Alex’s whereabouts only made John more worried. Alex had got himself tangled up with the wrong type of people. Maybe that’s why Alex was so stressed out all the time. Maybe that’s why he asked to get his share of the money from the fights. He needed the money. Alex had attended the fight last night as well. He looked more and more exhausted everyday. John had noticed Alex rub at his forehead every so often. John had asked him if he had a headache but Alex just shrugged at the question. Something was very, very wrong with Alex. He needed help. John just didn’t know how to give it to him.

xx

Damien was not in a good mood. He had been sitting with Hermione, Ron and Ginny for the last four hours trying to get through more study assignments that Hermione had made up. Today they were at Hermione’s house. Damien had to convince his parents that it was

safe to go to Hermione's house, since she lived in the muggle world and everything. But still they had sent Charlie Weasley with the three of them. Charlie was quite friendly with Mr Granger and were currently downstairs, discussing politics, both muggle and wizard.

"Hermione, this is pointless. Why should we bother learning the 150 different uses of Kuylines! What possible benefit is that to anyone?" Damien asked in a huff.

"Damy, please not again" Hermione said, still not looking up from her Ancient Runes work with Ron.

"No, but its true. If anything we should be learning Defence. It's the only thing that will help us. That and maybe healing, since that may be helpful as well" Damien continued.

The other three teens looked up at Damien with a sorrowful look.

"Damy, we know that you want to help with the Order, we all do! But you've got to face it. Dumbledore and our parents are never going to let us help in battle. They won't even let me and Hermione help, and we're going to come of age soon! There is no way that they will allow us to help them fight against You-Know-Who" Ron replied.

"I just don't know why we're bothering with this anymore" Damien said glumly.

The four teens had begged their parents to letting them help in finding Harry or any other Order work. The only thing they got told was to keep out of the way and study hard with their out of school studies.

"You know what? I think we all need a break. Let's go for a walk" Ginny said as she put down her quill and stood up.

Everyone agreed that they needed some air. So the four teens went out for a walk. Charlie was accompanying them of course. Charlie was speaking to Hermione and Ron while Damien and Ginny walked ahead of them.

"I was meaning to ask you. Um...have you heard from him at all?" Ginny asked quietly.

"No, sorry Gin. Other than the time he phoned to speak to dad, Harry's not made any contact" Damien replied sadly.

Damien ran his fingers across the smooth black stone embedded in the pendant that was around his neck. He had stuck to his word and had not removed the Layoo Jisteen. He always felt so relaxed after feeling the smooth texture of the black stone.

"Dad and the rest have been trying to look for him. They go out looking for him practically every night. But they've had no success." Damien continued.

Ginny looked away sadly. It was hard to hide her emotions from Damien. She knew that Damien knew how she felt towards Harry but it was still insensitive of her to complain how his disappearance was affecting her when Damien was the one related to Harry by blood.

"It's okay Damy, we'll find him soon. Professor Dumbledore won't let anything happen to him. Your mum and dad will keep him safe. I'm sure about that" Ginny said in a comforting voice.

Damien shrugged at her kind words. He knew that Harry was not coming home. He knew enough about Harry to know that he wouldn't return for fear of getting the rest of them hurt by either the Ministry or the Death Eaters. Damien walked along with Ginny, not even listening to his friend's words. He was lost in his own depressing thoughts. All Damien wanted was to speak to Harry, to see if he was okay. He wanted to help his brother, in anyway he could. But if the Order and the Ministry and the Death Eaters were having no luck in finding Harry, then what chance did he have?

"Damy! Gin! We're going in here" Hermione shouted to them.

Damien and Ginny looked around to see Hermione pointing at a large food store. Damien and Ginny walked back over to the store.

"We'll get some snack food, you know while we finish our studying" Hermione explained as she went inside the store.

"I second that" Ron said happily as he raced in after Hermione.

Charlie laughed at the look of awe on his brother's face. Ron loved his food but he loved the muggle sweets and the simplicity of them. There were no changing colours, no live chocolate frogs and no changing flavours. There were only simple tastes and simple textures which baffled Ron.

Damien went into the shop as well but he stalked off in the other direction to his friends. He was in a foul mood and didn't want to get annoyed while Ron mused over the muggle sweets and snacks. He faintly heard Ginny stopping Charlie from following him, telling him to give Damien some space. He mentally made a note to thank her. Ginny was nice. She always looked out for him. Damien knew how much she was hurting over losing Harry as well. She had been completely besotted with the boy who had saved her life. It was hard enough that it happened to be the boy most grown adults feared. He had grown up with the most feared wizard of all time. But now that Harry was away from all of that, Ginny still couldn't have a chance to get to know him. Ginny still liked Harry, a lot in fact, but she did a pretty good job of hiding it. Damien shook his head to clear his thoughts.

He had arrived at a small section that had take away food. Damien's stomach grumbled with hunger. He had eaten some breakfast but had skipped lunch at Hermione's house. He wasn't all that hungry then. That was at 1pm. it was now nearly 5pm. It would be dinner time soon. Then Damien would be going home. Damien started looking at the variety of food that was on sale. It looked quite tasty actually. Damien wondered around pointlessly for a while. Just as Damien decided it was time to go and look for the others a strange sight made him stop in his tracks.

Damien caught a glimpse of someone walking away from the take away section. The person had their back to Damien but Damien recognised him instantly. The messy black hair was a dead give away.

Damien sprinted towards his brother. Just before Harry walked out of the exit, Damien caught him from his arm. Harry spun around to see Damien looking at him. Harry was ready to lash out at the person who had grabbed him, but at seeing who it was and the expression on his

younger brother's face, Harry stopped in mid action. Both boys looked at each other for a moment.

Damien was the first to recover.

"Harry? What are you..." just then Damien heard Charlie's voice calling out for him.

He spun around to see if he could see anyone was coming to get him. He caught sight of Charlie looking around for him. Without thinking, Damien pushed Harry out of the store. Both boys ran to the corner of the street, so that they were out of sight.

"Damien, what are you doing here?" Harry asked at once.

"Forget me, what are you doing here? You shouldn't be walking around like this! Anyone can see you and report you to the Ministry" Damien said in an irritated tone.

"This is the muggle world, Damy! Very few people recognise me here" Harry replied.

"Still, Harry! It's dangerous. There are plenty of muggle born wizards and witches who would recognise you!" Damien couldn't believe how much of a risk Harry was taking.

Harry was just about to respond when they heard someone calling Damien's name. Damien started to panic as the sound came nearer. He realised that Charlie and Ron were calling out for him.

"Harry, you've got to go before someone sees you!" Damien said in an urgent tone. Harry turned around to leave but Damien caught his arm before he could go.

"Harry, how do I contact you?" Damien asked.

"You can't contact me!" Harry said at once.

"Harry, we don't have time for this, either you give me some way to contact you or I'll tell dad you were spotted near here. He'll have no problems finding you and bringing you home!" Damien didn't want to

threaten Harry, but it was the only way to ensure Harry wouldn't disappear again.

Harry scowled at Damien before looking behind him, the voices were getting nearer.

"Fine! Meet me here, this exact spot, tomorrow at noon. Don't be late and come alone, okay" Harry said quickly.

"Okay" Damien replied.

Harry left quickly and Damien watched Harry disappear in the midst of the surrounding people. Damien took a deep breath and turned around. He had only rounded the corner and nearly bumped into a frantic Charlie.

"Damien! Where were you? Why did you leave the store without telling anyone?" Charlie asked at once.

"I was feeling kinda sick in there. I only came outside for fresh air. I didn't mean to scare you, sorry" Damien replied in a steady voice. He could hardly hear his own voice over the thumping of his heart.

"Alright, just say to someone where you're gong next time" Charlie said in a softer tone.

The five of them went back to Hermione's house. Dinner was a quiet affair for Damien. His hunger seemed to have vanished. Damien couldn't wait for the night to go by and for the next morning to come. He was finally going to get a chance to meet Harry again. Damien stayed quiet until he got home. Charlie had made a portkey to transport him back to Godric's Hollow. As soon as he came back to his house, Damien rushed off to bed. He knew that he wouldn't be able to face his parents and hide the fact that he had ran into Harry. The thought of speaking to Harry again, was the only thing keeping him from saying anything to his parents. Damien knew that if his dad found out, he would insist on following Damien tomorrow. He would force Harry to come home. Damien wanted Harry to come home also, but he didn't want Harry to be forced. Harry had been manipulated into doing things he didn't want to do all his life. It was about time that stopped.

Damien fell into an uneasy sleep, hoping that Harry would turn up tomorrow.

xx

Damien stood at the exact spot Harry had instructed him to be at. He checked his watch again. It was a few minutes until noon. Damien had told his parents that he was visiting Hermione again. His mum seemed a bit suspicious but Damien told her that he had not managed to complete his assignment, so Hermione was going to help him today. Damien managed to convince her that Ron, Ginny and Charlie was going to be there again today. Thankfully there was a message for Lily from Remus, so she gave in to Damien's request and rushed to meet Remus. Damien used the portkey from last night to go back to Hermione's house.

Damien never went inside the Grangers home. He set out towards the food store right away. Damien was planning to go to Hermione house afterwards. He had been standing at the corner of the store for the last ten minutes.

Suddenly Damien felt someone approach from behind him. He turned around and saw Harry standing behind him. Before Damien could say anything, Harry motioned for him to keep quiet and follow him. He looked rather annoyed and Damien quietly reminded himself never to threaten or blackmail Harry again. They walked for a good while, all the while Harry stayed a few steps in front of Damien. He didn't even look behind to see if Damien was keeping up or not.

Harry stopped in front of a small building. Damien caught a glimpse of a sign just above the door. It read '**Barnsley Travel Inn**'.

Damien decided to keep quiet until they were inside. Harry went inside and went up a set of stairs. He pulled out a key and opened a door on his right. Damien quickly followed Harry inside and heard Harry close and lock the door. At long last Harry made eye contact with the younger boy.

"Okay, firstly, if you ever pull a stunt like that again, I swear Damien, I will pummel you into the next century" Harry said. Damien stood quietly as Harry continued to threaten him.

"I don't know why you think you could threaten me like that, but rest assured, I won't let you do it again. I hope you realize that by the time dad would have come here I would have left long ago. So the only reason that I agreed for you to come here was so that I could explain a few things to you." Harry stopped talking as he saw Damien crack one of his big smiles again. Albeit this time his smile had a little sadness behind it.

"What?" Harry asked a little annoyed.

"Nothing, it's just...it's the first time I heard you call him 'dad' that's all"

Harry stood still as he realized that Damien was right. Harry had called James 'dad' without even realizing. Harry sighed and walked over to Damien. Both boys sat down on the bed and looked awkwardly at each other.

"Damy, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to yell at you, but you shouldn't have forced me to do this. I want you to stay safe and that means to stay away from me" Harry said quietly.

"That's what you think. Tell me Harry, if you come home, how is that going to make life any harder for us? We're still being targeted by Death Eaters! We are in the midst of a war here. If anything, you being with us would make us stronger" Damien tried to make Harry see the sense in returning home.

"What about the Ministry? What about the rest of the wizarding world? They all want justice. They want the Dark Prince to pay for all the things that he did under Voldemort's command" Harry said quietly.

Damien was silent. He understood what Harry was meaning. Along with the Ministry, there were plenty of people, like Neville, who would want Harry to be punished for his crimes. Even if by some miracle, Professor Dumbledore managed to get Harry freed from the Ministry, how was he going to get the rest of the wizarding world to forgive Harry?

"Maybe, maybe we could explain to them that you're a different person now" Damien started but Harry cut him off.

“How many people are you going to try and convince? It’s not possible Damien.”

Damien stopped trying to convince Harry to come home after that. Both brothers sat and talked about many things, Hogwarts closing, the Order and their attempts at capturing Harry, the current articles in the Daily Prophet and the Ministry giving out statements about how close they were to capturing Lord Voldemort.

“The Ministry doesn’t even have a chance” Harry scoffed as Damien finished reciting the Minister’s latest speech.

“Minister Fudge doesn’t even know where to begin looking for him” Harry continued.

Damien looked at Harry closely.

“Harry, what if you were to help them, the Ministry I mean. You know everything about You-Know-Who. Maybe you could tell them where to find...” Damien was cut off by Harry again. Only this time Damien stopped mid-sentence by looking at the expression on Harry’s face alone.

Harry looked like he was barely restraining himself from lashing out at Damien. His fists were clenched tightly, his knuckles had turned white and his face had taken on a slight shade of pink. Harry closed his eyes and tried to calm himself.

“Never.ever.suggest.something.like.that.again” Harry managed to hiss out between clenched teeth.

Damien was momentarily struck by fear from Harry’s rage.

“I will never side with or help the *Ministry*” Harry continued to hiss at Damien.

“But Harry, all I meant was that both you and the Ministry want to finish You-Know-Who, so why not join forces” Damien tried to explain. Harry stood up and moved a few steps away from Damien. It was obvious that he was trying to clam himself down.

“Damien, I don’t want to *finish* Voldemort! I just...I can’t explain...” Harry sat down on the sofa across from the bed with his head in his hands.

Damien didn’t know what to say or what he should do. He got up slowly and went over to Harry.

“Harry, I don’t understand. If you’re not against Voldemort then why did you leave him?”

Harry looked up at Damien slowly. His emerald eyes were fixed on Damien. After a few moments, he spoke.

“I left him because he lied to me. You wouldn’t understand” Harry said and looked away from Damien.

“Try me” Damien said softly and sat down next to Harry.

Harry looked at Damien for a moment and then took a deep breath.

“When I found out what Voldemort had done, all the lies he told me, all the times he showed concern for me, it was all lies and deceit. I...I just lost it. I acted before I really took everything in. I left him because I didn’t want my mind to be obliterated again. I didn’t want to be used and manipulated. I didn’t leave because I wanted to join *Dumbledore* or the *Ministry* or anything like that! I left because I didn’t want to be used. Can’t you see Damien, if I come back home, I’ll be captured by the Ministry and thrown into Azkaban or I’ll be forced to fight against Voldemort. I’ll be used by Dumbledore as a weapon against Voldemort. I can’t do that! I can’t kill Voldemort! No matter what he did, I won’t be able to kill him!”

“So, what is it you were planning on doing? Were you just going to leave and hope that You-Know-Who won’t get his hands on you? Come on Harry, after everything that he did to you. You’re just going to let him get away with it?” Damien asked.

“I never said that. I said that I won’t be able to kill him. I never said anything about letting him get away with ruining my life! I’m going to make him pay, Damien. No doubt about that. Voldemort will wish that he had killed me when I was a baby.” Harry said coldly.

"What are you going to do?" Damien asked, truly curious about Harry's words.

"That's for me to know. You don't have to get involved. Look the reason I agreed for you to come here was to explain some things to you. You can't tell a single soul that you saw me or that you spoke to me. You can never come here again. Chances are that I'm not going to be sticking to one place anyway. I'll be moving around a lot. I just wanted to explain to you that I'm truly sorry for the way I treated you and everyone else around you. Please, Damien, go back to living your life. Don't try and look for me. Just don't get involved in this mess, Okay"

Damien stood up and looked incredulously at Harry.

"You really are unbelievable, you know that?" Damien yelled at Harry.

"What?" Harry asked confusedly.

"You really expect me to walk away and never see you again? You really think I'll walk out of here and never try and help you. When are you going to understand that we are *brothers*? We are meant to help each other and look out for each other! If I walk away from you and leave you alone at a time like this, then I'm the world's worst brother!" Damien finished.

Harry was looking at Damien with a puzzled expression, Damien went on regardless.

"I don't care what you say! I'm going to continue trying to help you."

"Help me? How? How are you going to help me? What can you do to help?" Harry asked.

"I don't know! Anything. Anything you need help with. Face it, Harry. Whatever it is you have decided to do against Voldemort, you can't do it alone. I'm going to help you" Damien replied.

Both boys continued to argue and debate to the point where Harry finally gave up.

“Fine! Okay. You can help! You can be my link to the Wizarding world. But understand this Damien, if you breathe a word of this to anyone....”

“Oh come on, Harry, you really think I’ll blab about you to anyone! Give me some credit.” Damien exclaimed.

Harry considered Damien for a moment before nodding his head at him.

“You better go, I think this is enough for today.” Harry said quietly.

“Yeah, I’ve got to get back to Hermione’s before anyone realizes I’m missing. Harry, how am I supposed to contact you?” Damien asked as he stood up.

Harry thought for a minute before pulling out a mobile phone from his jeans pocket.

“Here, take this. I’ll get another one” Harry said quietly.

“What is it?” Damien asked as he took the small device from Harry and looked at it closely.

“Just consider it as muggle magic” Harry said as he smiled at Damien’s awed expression.

“What do you mean?”

“Look, every time I need to speak to you I’ll send you a text message”

“A what?” asked Damien.

“A text message. See this little window here, words will appear here. I’ll send you the message, instructing you to meet me where and when. Now listen to me, Damien. Under no circumstance are you to ever to call me or come over to see me without my permission, okay?”

“Okay” Damien answered. He was still looking at the strange mobile phone.

“Don’t mess around with the settings. I’ve got the phone switched to silent mode. When I send you a message, it will automatically receive it and will start to vibrate. You won’t hear anything, but if you’ve got the phone on you, you will feel the vibrations. Just read the message and then delete it, understand”

Damien nodded his head again and after Harry demonstrated the use of a mobile phone, Damien was feeling very happy about his new ‘Muggle magic toy’.

“How do you know so much about muggles, Harry?” Damien asked as he pocketed the phone.

“Just stuff I picked up when I was...you know, undercover” Harry smiled and winked at Damien.

Damien knew that by undercover, Harry, meant when he was posing as Alex in the muggle world. Damien didn’t say anything to Harry about his knowledge of ‘Alex’. Damien didn’t want to make Harry angry again.

Damien left shortly afterwards. Harry walked him down to the corner of the shop, where he met him that afternoon and promised that he would send a message to him soon.

Damien went to Hermione’s house and was in a better mood than yesterday. Although Hermione was surprised to see Damien, she didn’t question the strangeness of the event. Damien spent a few hours with her and then portkeyed back home.

Things were working out a lot better than Damien had hoped. Now he would be in regular contact with Harry and could also help him in his fight against the person who ripped their family apart.

xx

Damien was studying at the Burrow when he got his first text message from Harry. Damien had not listened to Harry and had played around with the phone. He was too curious about the strange phone and had gone into the various different menus. At which point

Damien had managed to set the phone to 'Loud' he didn't know. He only became aware of it when he heard a strange noise.

Damien, Ron, Ginny and Hermione were all sitting at the table, in the midst of discussing a Herbology question, when suddenly a funny sound was heard around them. At first Damien didn't realize what had happened, but then he quickly realized that the sound was coming from his pocket. He hastily tried to switch the sound off as discreetly as possible, but the three teens around him realized that the sound was coming from him as well.

"What is that?" Ron asked as he tried to grab the phone from Damien.

"Nothing, it's nothing" Damien tried in vain to hide the blasted thing, that still kept making beeping noises.

"What is it? It's making all that noise, where did you get it from?" Ginny joined in.

Hermione was the only one who was watching everything silently. She of course knew what that was, being muggle born, she was accustomed to seeing muggle things all the time. Damien had a mobile phone! But why? And where did he get it from? Surely his mother didn't give it to him. It was pointless for a wizard to have that. Who was he going to phone?

Hermione kept quiet and let Damien hide the phone, claiming that it was nothing and that he didn't want to discuss the strange device. Hermione waited until Damien went to the bathroom before quickly whispering the truth about what that ringing thing was to Ron and Ginny. All three agreed that they were going to keep an eye on Damien to see what this was all about.

Damien re emerged after a few minutes. He had read the message Harry had sent him. It told Damien to meet Harry at the same place again, that afternoon at 5pm. Damien told his friends that he was feeling unwell and that he was going to go home.

The other three didn't stop him, but Hermione had cleverly cast a tracking spell on Damien. This way for the next 12 hours, she would be able to see where Damien was going to be.

It didn't take long for them to realize that Damien had left the Burrow but instead of going back into Godric's Hollow, where the portkey had taken Damien, the teen had called the Knight bus and left to go to the muggle world.

Hermione, Ron and Ginny quickly grabbed their wands and prepared themselves to follow where Damien was headed. The knight bus dropped Damien off in the centre of a small muggle town. Hermione was surprised to see that it was near where she lived. The three teen's portkeyed to Hermione's house. It was the portkey that Hermione had used that morning to come to the Burrow. The three teens followed Damien on the special map that Hermione had conjured to track Damien. Soon they didn't need the map as they spotted the dark haired boy making his way purposefully towards a small building.

The three teens didn't even stop to read the name of the building. They just followed Damien closely, too afraid that if they took their eyes away for a moment, then they might lose Damien. They saw Damien stop before a door and knock four times on the door. Ron, Ginny and Hermione were hiding around the corner. They had no idea about why Damien had come here. Why Damien had lied and come to the muggle world? They had not expected to see the reason so quickly.

The door opened and the three teens caught a glimpse of Harry standing at the door. Harry opened the door and allowed Damien to come inside. The door closed once Damien went inside. The three teens stood stock still in shock. They had seen Harry. He was living in the muggle world. Damien knew about it and was at this very moment with him.

“What do we do now?” Ron asked the other two.

[illegible]

Chapter Thirty Nine

Hermione was trying to get her panicked mind to work.

“Hermione, what should we do?” Ron asked again.

Hermione raised her brown eyes to look at Ron and Ginny. Both were looking worried and puzzled.

“We have to go in as well” Hermione said a little shakily.

Ron looked at her wide eyed.

“Are you insane? Harry will kill us!” Ron yelled.

Both Hermione and Ginny shushed him at once.

“Come on” Hermione said and walked towards the door, Ron and Ginny followed a little hesitantly.

Hermione stopped at the door and seemed to gather all her courage. She knocked softly on the door and then opened it. She was surprised that the door wasn't locked. The three teens stood at the door and saw Harry and Damien sitting on the bed, in the middle on a conversation.

Harry was already on his feet and Ginny thought she saw a flash of silver in his hand, but Harry quickly pocketed whatever the weapon was. The look of fury on Harry's face was making the three teens wish they could turn around and run away. Nevertheless they stood their ground firmly.

Damien was the one who ran to the three teens and ushered them in. He quickly closed the door and locked it.

“What the hell! What are you guys doing here?” Damien exclaimed.

Ron tore his eyes away from Harry and looked at his friend.

“We can ask you the same thing mate! What are you doing here?”

Damien looked at Ron and was on the verge to shout at him but seemed to change his mind.

"How did you guys know where I was?" Damien asked with a terrified look towards Harry.

"We followed you" Hermione said with out thinking. She realized that she had just gotten Damien into some serious trouble with Harry. She glanced towards the still silent form of Harry. The raven haired boy was looking at Damien with a murderous glare.

Damien was looking confused and scared. His brown eyes darted from Harry to Hermione.

"What? That's not possible!" He yelled at Hermione.

"It doesn't matter now, it's a good thing we found you. How could you not tell us that you had found Harry? Why did you keep it a secret? We would have wanted to help, you know that!" Ginny said without looking at Harry.

"I don't need anyone's help" Harry said quietly but the four teens jumped at the sound of his voice.

"Get out" Harry hissed at them.

"All of you leave"

"Harry..." Damien started to say but was cut off by Harry.

"No, Damien. If you can't tell that you're being followed, and by three people nonetheless, then you won't be able to help me!" Harry wasn't yelling but the disappointment was evident in his tone.

Damien looked hurtfully towards his friends. They had just ruined his chance to help his brother.

"All of you leave, now!" Harry instructed.

Before anyone could move, Hermione took a brave step nearer Harry. She was now standing closest to him.

“No” she said simply.

Ron looked as if lightening had struck him. He glanced at Harry for his reaction. Harry stood still, seemingly trying to figure what was wrong with this girl.

“Excuse me!” Harry asked acidly.

“We’re not going to leave. It wasn’t Damien’s fault. We put a tracking spell on him. There was no way he would have been able to detect that he was being followed. Like Ginny said it’s a good thing we followed him. We...we really wanted to find you, Harry.” Hermione said.

Harry’s emerald eyes darkened as he heard the last few words leave Hermione’s mouth.

“Yeah, five thousand galleons worth, I bet” Harry replied.

The three teens looked at Harry with deep hurt glistening in their eyes. Ginny strode forward, unable to keep her Weasley temper away.

“How dare you! How could even think something like that? We couldn’t care less if there were a ten thousand galleons reward on your head! We would never turn you in” Ginny practically screamed at him.

Harry turned to look at her. His cool gaze swept over her, making her shudder.

“Wouldn’t you?” Harry asked again with a disbelieving look towards her.

This time Hermione took over the conversation.

“Harry, you may think that everyone is greedy and would hand you over to the Ministry for money, but we’re not like that. If you don’t believe that then just consider it as pay back for saving our lives, that we’ll keep your whereabouts a secret in order to save your life”

Harry seemed a little taken aback.

“Fine! You’ve said what you wanted to say, now get out” Harry said to them.

“I’m not finished yet” Hermione said calmly.

“I want to help you, Harry.” Hermione continued simply.

Ron, Ginny and Damien all looked at Hermione. No one was expecting those words to come out of her mouth.

“You want to help me?” Harry asked with another disbelieving look on his face.

“Yes”

“Okay, what kind of help do you think you can give me? What makes you think that you even have the ability to help me? Merlin! You, all of you, think that this is some kind of game, a stupid school project! This is real life! You don’t stand a chance against the stupidest Death Eater, how on earth can you expect to help me fight against Voldemort!” Harry shouted.

The four teens flinched as Harry shouted the word ‘Voldemort’ but remained silent.

“You can’t help me! There is nothing you can do that would help me. In fact, your constant meeting with me would only get me in trouble, if someone was to follow you.” Harry continued.

Hermione waited until Harry had stopped talking.

“You’re wrong, Harry. I can help you. I told you once before, it’s the simple things that can help, you just have to be ready to accept it”

Harry looked up at Hermione. He remembered those words clearly.

“You are right. None of us are very good at duelling. We won’t stand a chance against the Death Eaters let alone V-Voldemort” Harry heard the surprised gasps coming from behind Hermione as she said the Dark Lord’s name for the first time.

"But, there are other ways in which you may need my help. I can't speak for anyone else, but I'm going to help you in anyway possible. You're going to need some sort of contact, a link to the wizarding world. I can be that. We all can help with that. Whatever it is you are going to be doing. I'm sure we can help you with it. I'm not saying that we will stand with you on the battlefield. I'm just saying that we can help with the simple things, even if it's just to be here for you"

Harry looked shocked at Hermione's words.

"Why?" he asked.

"Why would you want to do that? It's not as if we're friends, hell, I was horrible to you. Why are you offering to help me? You should feel no loyalty towards me!" Harry asked truly confused by Hermione's intentions.

Hermione smiled sadly at Harry and took a deep breath.

"Tell me, Harry if Voldemort wins, what do you think will happen to the wizarding world? What would happen to people like me? Like my parents? We will be the first to be wiped out. Muggles and muggle borns will be targeted first, followed by families like Ron's. Families that have been labelled '*Blood traitors*'. We will be hunted and killed, all of us. That is what his aim is, isn't it. 'All magic to be possessed by Pure bloods only'. That's why I'm doing this, Harry. I don't want to sit back and leave my fate and the fate of my family in someone else's hands. I don't want to stand back and watch the war being lost by our side and not being able to do anything about it. I want to participate in securing my future. The Ministry and the Order won't let us help. If I can help in defeating Voldemort, help in any way at all, then I'm ready to do anything. That includes helping you. You're right, I have no loyalties towards you, but I'm ready to give you a second chance, if you'll give me a chance as well"

Hermione finished and looked at Harry. The raven haired boy stood still as he listened to Hermione's words. Hermione could tell that Harry was struggling to allow Hermione to help him. Her words had definitely struck him and Harry was trying hard to think of an excuse that would dishearten her.

“You realise what would happen if you got caught? You would serve time in Azkaban for helping a known criminal. You would be punished for not turning me in” Harry said. He was talking directly to Hermione. The other three teens stood silently, watching Harry and Hermione in awe, wondering which one will fall and admit defeat.

Hermione paled a little at the thought of Azkaban, but she cleared her throat and continued.

“We’ll cross that bridge if and when we come to it. If I can secure the fates of my parents and other muggle borns, then it’s a price I’m willing to pay”

Harry could tell by the tremble in her voice that she was trying to be brave, but was failing spectacularly. Harry didn’t blame her. The thought of Azkaban scared him as well.

Harry looked at the two red heads in the corner.

“You two have the same opinion as her” Harry asked.

Ginny and Ron looked at each other for a second before replying in unison.

“Yes”

Harry looked at the three of them. His gaze flitted over to Damien. The four teens didn’t seem to realise what they were getting themselves into. Nonetheless Harry found that he couldn’t think of a valid excuse to turn them away. Harry could use the help they provided. Like Hermione said, he needed a link to the wizarding world.

“Okay” Harry gave in.

The look of delight on the four teen’s faces made Harry smile a little. He quickly disguised the smile as a frown.

“But you all have to do what I say, and you have to follow my every order. Agreed?”

“Agreed!” came the answer in unison.

Harry looked at the four teens.

'What have I got myself into' Harry thought to himself as he saw the excited whispers fly between the four teens

XX

Hermione had worked everything out. They would meet with Harry three times a week. Those three times the teens would feed their parents lies about where they were going to be. Hermione would say that she was going to the Burrow, while Damien said he was going to Hermione's house and Ron and Ginny would say they were meeting at Damien's house. Hermione was thankful that the Order meetings had started up again and so no one could come to supervise them.

Harry had changed his location. He was now staying at another travel inn, which was further away from Hermione's house, but they took a muggle taxi to the travel inn. Hermione was so glad that her parents were still giving her spending money otherwise she would have to make up excuses to get money from them. Harry still communicated via the mobile phone, which Hermione had set back to silent mode.

It was the very first meeting, and everyone was feeling a bit nervous about being around Harry.

"Nice room" Ron commented as he walked into the small room, occupying a bed, a chest of drawers and a small wardrobe. There was door on the far side which was presumably the bathroom.

Harry shut the door after Ron and gave him a glare.

"Yeah, really nice. I can walk from one end to the other in about three seconds flat! Wonderful!" Harry said sarcastically. Ron looked mortified that he had somehow insulted Harry. He looked over at Damien with a bewildered expression.

"You didn't see the room he had when he was with him" Damien explained in a whisper. Ron nodded his head as understanding filled him.

Damien remembered the massive room that he had seen when he witnessed Harry's memory, talking with Draco. The room was like four sizes of the common room and Harry's bed was big enough for four people to sleep in. To Harry, this room must feel like a claustrophobic, prison cell.

Harry walked over and locked the door. He stood facing the four nervous teens.

"Well? Sit down" Harry instructed them.

The four teens scrambled onto the bed and Harry looked at them with an annoyed expression. The four teens moved themselves from the bed and sat down on the ground. Harry smirked and waved his hand. Five chairs were transfigured from the wardrobe and chest of drawers. Hermione looked in complete awe at Harry's transfiguration skills and sat down gingerly on one of the chairs.

Harry saw Ron take out his wand. At once Harry reached Ron and grabbed his wand from him. Ron looked surprised and shocked as Harry snatched his wand away from him.

"What do you think you're doing?" Harry hissed at him.

"Nothing, I was only going to conjure some parchment, you know, in case we needed it to take any notes." Ron was looking shaken by Harry's anger.

"You don't need to take note of anything! I'll remind you of what you have to do. All of you have to remember to never to use magic when you're with me" Harry said in a dangerous voice.

"Why?" Ginny asked.

"All of your wands are registered with the Ministry. All wands are registered to them. That way they can track what kind of magic you perform and where you perform it. If the Ministry pick up that there was magic performed in a muggle inhabited area without prior permission, they will start tracking you. Something here will alert them to my presence and they will know I'm using muggle areas to hide." Harry explained.

"This is going to be difficult as it is, I can't deal with the muggle authorities being sent after me as well, and the Ministry would do that in a heartbeat" Harry continued.

"What about the magic you just did?" asked Damien.

"That was wandless magic, it can't be traced. Wandless magic is the only magic you can do in these situations, but since there are only a few things I can do without a wand, I'm restricted in that area."

"You mean you can't perform any magic with a wand?" asked Ginny.

"My wand isn't registered with the Ministry, but Voldemort has his own way of tracing our wands. So basically I can only use my wand in extreme situations and in locations that I can leave quickly, mostly in the wizarding world. I don't want anyone knowing where I'm staying just now" Harry said bitterly.

Damien felt really sorry for Harry. Living without magic was a horrible thing for a witch or wizard, and for Harry it must be awful.

"That reminds me, Dami I need to speak to you in private. I'll speak to you before you go, okay" Harry said.

"Okay" Damien replied, looking a bit perplexed at why Harry would want to speak to him in private.

Harry sat down and began the first meeting.

"Right, first things first. I want to explain that while many of you may think that I'm out to destroy Voldemort that is not the case"

As expected, Hermione and Ron looked startled. Damien already knew this so had no reaction while Ginny looked worriedly at Harry.

"I'm not anyone's soldier, not Voldemort's and certainly not Dumbledore's. I don't care about the wizarding world. I don't care about this war. Whatever I plan on doing against Voldemort is for pure and simple revenge. He took away my life, by stealing me from my family, so I'm going to take away his life, literally" Harry stopped to enjoy the effects of his words.

Hermione was thinking furiously, trying to work out what Harry meant. Ron was looking as confused as he usually does. Damien and Ginny looked at each other before shrugging their shoulders in confusion.

"Voldemort has made arrangements to stay immortal" Harry explained.

"He has made Horcruxes. These are objects that have a piece of his soul in them. That way, if anyone tries to attack him while these Horcruxes are safe, Voldemort can't be killed. What I plan on doing is finding and destroying these Horcruxes, making Voldemort mortal again. His Horcruxes is his life, I plan on destroying them, just like he destroyed my life. You can call in poetic justice if you like." Harry couldn't help smile at the awed looks on the teen's faces.

"But let me make one thing perfectly clear. I don't plan on, nor will I ever, kill Voldemort. He may have done unforgivable things to me, but he still brought me up. He showed me care, even if it was fake and was done for an ulterior motive, he still took care of me. I won't be able to raise my wand against him. I just want you guys to understand that" Harry tried to keep the hurt away from his voice but it still crept in.

"Now, I don't really know much about his Horcruxes, except that he has made seven Horcruxes. One piece is inside him, so we can forget about that one. The second piece was inside a silver pendant. It belonged to Salazar Slytherin. That one can be crossed of the list as well"

"Why, what happened to that one?" Ron asked.

"I destroyed it" Harry answered simply.

Ron looked at Harry in wonder.

"You...you did? When?" Ron asked.

"Why does it matter?" Harry snapped at him. Harry realised his mistake and calmed himself down.

“Sorry, it’s just...its not one of my fondest memories” Harry explained to a red Ron.

Ron nodded his head and let Harry continue.

“So, that leaves five Horcruxes. What they are and where they are placed, I have no idea” Harry finished.

Hermione snapped her head up to look at Harry.

“That’s all? You don’t know what or where these Horcruxes are? How were you planning on finding them?” she asked in a disappointed voice.

“Well, I didn’t get a chance to research them, you know, what with the entire wizarding population after my blood!” Harry replied snidely.

Hermione looked thoughtfully for a moment.

“Horcruxes, I’ve heard about them or at least I’ve heard the name being mentioned” Hermione said, mostly to herself.

“Very unlikely. Hogwarts wouldn’t teach you anything about Horcruxes. It’s the darkest of magic. In order to make a Horcrux, you have to take a life. It has to be done in cold blood and there are only so many times you can split your soul. Voldemort has done it to the maximum. Seven times. Seven is the most powerful number. It’s the most magical number. You can’t make anymore than seven Horcruxes.” Harry explained.

Hermione continued to look thoughtful, her brown eyes were narrowed, and her brow was knitted, as she tried to bring up the memory of where she has heard about Horcruxes. Suddenly she let out a small ‘oh!’ and looked excitedly over at Ron.

“Ron! Remember that time when we were studying at the Burrow. Fred and George said that they were trying to use the extendable ears on the Order meeting the night before. They mentioned Horcruxes! Remember they thought it was such a funny word. They started sniggering when they heard the word being mentioned and Mrs Weasley heard them and then confiscated the extendable ears

Ron, Hermione, Ginny and Damien all sat in Damien's bedroom, trying to figure out how they could find and take all the information about Horcruxes to Harry.

They had agreed to meet Harry in a five days time. Harry was going to send another text message to Damien, to see if they had managed to get any information on the Horcruxes. Damien was in his own thoughts. He had an additional mission to complete for Harry. Damien had been pulled aside by Harry, at the end of the last meeting. Harry had asked Damien to find his original wand, which James still had, hidden somewhere. Harry had told him that the wand was very important to him and that even though Voldemort would be able to trace that wand also, Harry was more comfortable using that one. It was the wand Harry had used most of his life. Damien had told Harry that he would make every attempt at finding and bringing Harry's wand back to him. How Damien was going to do that, he had no idea.

"We have to figure something out, soon" Ginny said to break the silence.

"Alright, let's take it a step at a time." Hermione said.

"First we have to get into the Order meeting, then we can sort out how to take the information to Harry. But how do we get in?" Hermione said, thinking aloud.

"We can't go in, there is no way. Professor Dumbledore will see through any disguises we put on and our parents will probably bury us alive if we try to gatecrash one of the meetings" Ron pointed out.

"Okay, what about your dad's cloak, Damien? Can't one of us just sneak in with that?" Ginny asked, trying hard to think of a possible solution.

"Can't, Moody can see through invisibility cloaks. His crazy eye can see through pretty much anything" Damien said sadly.

"Other than him, I'm pretty sure Professor Dumbledore can sense it as well. Whenever I used it at Hogwarts, I was sure Professor Dumbledore could tell" Damien added.

“Can’t we just use the extendable ears and listen to the meeting?” Ginny tried again.

“Don’t be stupid! After mum caught Fred and George, she’ll have definitely put some impenetrable charms on the door, so we can’t slip anything under the door” Ron said.

"I'm only suggesting ideas Ronald! Why don't you try suggesting something?" Ginny snapped back.

“Alright, alright! Enough.” Damien shouted at both of them.

“Actually, Ronald you made a good point! Fred and George have tried many times to overhear the Order meetings. Maybe this calls for a joint effort” Hermione said with a strange gleam in her eyes.

“We’ve definitely been a bad influence on her” Ron said quietly to Damien.

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After a few days, the next Order meeting was scheduled to take place. Hermione had planned everything, and although it was quite a risky plan, everyone had agreed to do it. The only problem was to convince the Weasley twins to unknowingly agree to carry out their part of the plan.

Hermione had worked this part out as well. All she had to do was challenge their ego and everything else should fall into place. She was extremely nervous to play such a prank, but everyone agreed that it was the only way to get what they needed. So, on the day of the meeting, the six teenagers found themselves standing in the Headquarters of the Order. They were taken to their room and told not to wander around. As soon as Mrs Weasley left, the plan was kicked into action.

“Ginny, what is it you’re going to opt to do after you come of age?” Hermione asked in a normal voice.

“Well, I was thinking that I would like to join Fred and George, you know with their joke shop idea. It could be lots of fun” Ginny said in a conversational tone.

Both girls were talking in a normal voice and they weren’t talking particularly loud, just loud enough so that the twins would overhear their conversation. The twins swung around at the mention of their names and heard what Ginny’s future plans were.

“Oh come on, Ginny! Why would you want to waste your time with something like that? You’ve got a lot of potential. You should do something a bit more meaningful” Hermione said quietly to Ginny.

They had got the result they hoped for. Fred and George heard Hermione’s comment and erupted with protest.

“What do you mean waste of time!” Fred exclaimed.

“Ginny can do what she likes!” George joined in.

“Of course she can, I only meant that she should do something more...constructive with her magic, that’s all!” Hermione replied.

“Like what? What is it you’re going to do, Hermione? Bore everyone with useless, pointless information all the time? Or do something creative with your magic?” Fred yelled at her.

At this point Ron intervened.

“Come on guys, that’s a bit mean”

“Yeah, don’t shout at her. She only gave her opinion” Damien joined in.

“So you agree with her then. You think we can’t run a joke shop? Fine! We’ll show all of you” George said angrily.

Bingo! That’s exactly the reaction the four teens were hoping to get from the fiery twins. Ginny quickly stood up and joined her brothers.

“Come on, we should go and discuss our future” Ginny said while leading the twins out of the room.

Ron, Hermione and Damien, sighed in relief. The first part went according to plan. Now it all came down to whether Ginny would be able to pull off the next part of the plan.

It only took fifteen minutes for Ginny to pull the prank. Ron, Hermione and Damien heard the frantic shouting of the twins and the horrified screaming of Ginny coming from the ground floor. Hermione and the two boys went running to the ground floor. The sight that met them was frightening. Even though all of this was planned, it still wasn't easy to watch.

Ginny was lying on the ground, bleeding furiously from her mouth, nose and ears. Fred and George were trying to stop the flow of blood but couldn't do anything to stop it. Ron ran forward and started to shout uncontrollably at the twins.

“WHAT HAVE YOU DONE? GINNY! OH MY GOD!”

“I don't know what happened. We were only going to do a simple prank, but the spell went wrong! It won't stop!” Fred and George were nearly in tears as they tried to stop their little sister, from bleeding to death.

Hermione felt herself break into a sweat. She knew that Ginny was alright, since she had planted the shrunken blood vials into Ginny's mouth, nose and ears herself. All Ginny had to do was to bite down on the vial inside her mouth, all the vials planted in her would keep on supplying fake blood, until the counter curse was performed. Ginny was not losing any of her own blood. Ron had been instructed to use the counter curse at the right moment. But still, the image of Ginny on the floor, bleeding freely from her nose, mouth and ears was very disturbing.

Hermione had got the idea from Fred and George's skiving snack boxes, they had used the bleeding pastilles but Hermione went one step further and used the same formula to make up the vials. The fake blood was not a problem as Hermione had used fake blood

supplied in muggle joke packs. All she did was a simple repeat spell, and the blood kept on being refilled in the vials.

Hermione and Damien rushed to the room, where the Order meeting was being held. Hermione didn't even need to knock at the door as the door was thrown open by a livid looking Mrs Weasley.

"What is going on?" Mrs Weasley yelled as soon as she opened the door.

"Mrs-Mrs Weasley, G-Ginny! Ginny, something's wrong!" Hermione stuttered and stepped back as Mrs Weasley ran past her and went towards the sound of all the yelling.

Damien and Hermione stood back as the entire Order went racing towards the sound of screaming and yelling. Mrs Weasley's frantic yelling had caught the attention of all the members of the Order.

As soon as the last people left the room, Hermione and Damien took their chance and slipped into the room. They felt awful for what was going to happen to Fred and George, but they had all decided that their pranks were going too far, this would calm them a bit.

Hermione took out the small recording globe and shrunk it. She was glad she had time to go to Diagon alley. It was the best recording device used in the Magical world. Hermione had planned for Ginny to distract the members of the Order so she could slip into the room and plant the small recording globe. That way the whole meeting would be recorded and they could take the globe to Harry.

Hermione set to work and with Damien's help, shrunk the globe and planted it in the inside seam of the curtains. That way it would be kept out of the way, so no one could accidentally see it. Hermione hoped Moody or Professor Dumbledore would not be able to detect the recording globe, but that was all left to fate now. Just as Hermione planted the globe and turned to grab Damien and leave, her brown eyes caught the litter of parchment on the front desk. Hermione caught the illustration of a silver pendant, shaped like a serpent that had two heads on either side of its intertwined body with shimmering green eyes. Hermione recognised the pendant. She had seen on Harry, that day in the Gryffindor dorm, when she helped heal his bite

wound. Hermione remembered catching sight of the bizarre pendant, when she had bent lower to inspect his shoulder wound. She remembered Harry's words at their last meeting, 'The second piece was inside a silver pendant. It belonged to Salazar Slytherin. That one can be crossed off the list as well'.

Hermione's eyes widened as she realized that the illustration in front of her was of the Slytherin Horcrux, which Harry must have destroyed. Hermione had figured that Slytherin's pendant must be shaped like a serpent, it was only fitting.

"Damien, that paperwork, I think it's of the Horcruxes!" Hermione whispered to Damien.

Damien was busy concentration on listening for anyone coming back into the room and so didn't hear her at first.

"What?" he said at once but Hermione was already walking towards the desk.

"Hermione!" Damien cried out quietly as he rushed after her.

He saw Hermione quickly draw out her wand and mutter a spell, just under her breath.

A funny blue light started covering the few pieces of parchment and the small book on the desk. Before Damien could ask what Hermione was doing, there was a blue flash, and an identical book and pieces of parchment hit the desk with a small thud. Damien was staring at the copies that Hermione had made of these documents, but before he could say anything, there was a shout heard from outside.

Hermione quickly pulled the copied items into her pocket and grabbed Damien before running outside. As they approached they saw Professor Dumbledore kneeling next to Ginny, who was still throwing up blood. Fred and George were in tears along with Mr and Mrs Weasley.

Hermione remembered the last part of the plan and ran to Moody.

“Auror Moody! please do something! You can’t let her die! Please, please, do something” Hermione cried as she brought fake tears in her eyes.

Moody was looking very worried and tried to calm the distressed girl down, but seeing as he had no experience in this area, he failed miserably.

“There, there, it’ll all be alright” he said very uncomfortably.

“HOW! HOW WILL IT BE OKAY? YOU HAVE TO DO SOMETHING!” Hermione screamed at him, so that most of the members of the Order were now looking at Hermione and some even rushed over to help Moody calm down the distraught girl.

That was the required reaction as Ron took that opportunity to mutter the counter curse as most eyes were on Hermione and Moody. Ron was standing close enough to Ginny, to be able to hit her directly with the counter curse. Hermione knew that it was important to keep Moody’s attention away from Ron while he hit Ginny with the counter curse. His magical eye was the only thing that could have seen Ron healing Ginny. With Hermione’s little panic attack, Moody was too occupied with her to notice anything else. As soon as Ron hit Ginny with the counter curse the blood stopped flowing and Ginny sat up, pretending to feel weak and sore.

“Ginny! Oh Ginny! Are you alright? Oh my poor baby. What the hell happened? Who did this to you? Tell me!” Mrs Weasley was in the midst of hugging the blood covered girl and planting kisses in her hair.

Ginny pretended to faint and was at once rushed into one of the rooms. Hermione and Damien followed behind the very pale looking twins and Ron.

Ginny woke up and gave a very convincing performance of ‘I don’t know what happened’ and ‘I just want to sleep’. No one spoke about how Ginny got in that particular state. The twins were looking mortified, Ron and Hermione gave them discreet looks to say ‘don’t say anything, it’ll be dealt with later’. Mrs Weasley rushed home with Ginny, Ron and the twins, while Damien and Hermione were asked if they were okay and to go back up to their room. Damien felt he was

Chapter Forty

Harry sat amongst the four proud teenagers. In front of him was the copied journal belonging to the late Jason Riley along with other parchments that had various drawings on them. Harry sat silently as Hermione, Ron and Damien explained how they got their hands on these items. The recording globe was also sitting in front of Harry. Damien had sneaked in the Order meeting room later with his invisibility cloak. Hermione had said that they had enough information so they took the globe and brought it to Harry.

If he was completely honest, Harry hadn't expected the four Gryffindors to complete their mission at all. He was hoping that they would be disheartened with their failure and then leave him alone. He looked at their beaming faces as they retold the story again.

Harry picked up the journal and opened it cautiously. Harry felt a strange emotion bubble within him. Harry had killed Riley and he felt no remorse in doing so. The man was scum, he was responsible for a lot of misery and when Harry was sent on this assignment, he had been told that Riley was trying to blackmail Lord Voldemort. Harry remembered the rage Harry had felt at that time. Riley was killed by Harry for the crime of betrayal. Riley was betraying Voldemort by threatening to expose his weaknesses. Harry pushed away these thoughts. He didn't want to think about the revenge for betrayal he took on behalf of someone who had betrayed Harry his whole life.

Harry concentrated on the journal instead. It was full of *ideas* about what the Horcruxes could be. There was nothing definite in there. The only two items that were definite Horcruxes were the Slytherin pendant and a black diary. Harry looked at the four teens before him.

"Well, like I said before, the necklace can be crossed off the list. As for the diary, I have my suspicions on what that could be"

Ron, Hermione, Damien and Ginny didn't push about the diary, but listened carefully to Harry.

"As for this" Harry said while picking up the journal.

"It seems that this is nothing more than guesses and ideas of what the other Horcruxes are. There is nothing concrete in here" Harry finished, throwing the book back down on the table.

"We should still look through it. Maybe there are some genuine clues in there" Damien said as he picked up the book.

The five teens huddled together around the small table and started looking through the paperwork.

"This Riley person sure had a lot of ideas" Ron commented as he looked through the pages and pages of written work.

"Who is Riley anyway and how did he learn about the Horcruxes?" Ron asked.

"He was a Death Eater" Harry responded without looking up from the paperwork he was examining.

All four teens turned to look at Harry.

"Was a Death Eater? As in, he's not a Death Eater anymore?" Damien asked, feeling uneasy.

"Yeah, he's no more" Harry answered simply.

The four teens didn't quite know how to respond to that. They understood the meaning of 'no more' perfectly and didn't want to know how Harry knew this information, so instead they concentrated on the information inside the book.

After what seemed like hours, the five teens finally came to a section that gave some indication to the identity of the Horcruxes.

'Although no one knows for certain the identities of these Horcruxes, one thing is for certain. Four of these Horcruxes are items that belong to four very powerful Witches and Wizards. Even more bizarre is the fact of who these four are. They are none other than the four founders of Hogwarts school of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Although, what items were used by the Dark Lord is not known yet, except for

the serpent pendant that belonged to Salazar Slytherin. The other three could be anything'

Hermione got up and handed Harry a loose parchment that she was holding. Harry looked at it curiously, as it was written in a different handwriting than the rest. It was definitely not Riley's handwriting. Harry saw Hermione rushing back to the table and pulling at the globe. Suddenly the globe turned black and Dumbledore's voice filled the room.

"As I've said before, the search for Voldemort's Horcruxes has to begin soon. We have been occupied with other things lately, but our priority has to be finding and destroying these Horcruxes..."

Dumbledore continued to speak and started giving out orders to certain members of the Order. Ron and Hermione realised with a sick jolt that they had recorded all the names of all the members of the Order. If this fell into the wrong hands, it would mean complete chaos. The five teens listened closely to Dumbledore's orders, but nothing seemed to give them any clues. Harry looked down at the parchment with, what was definitely, Dumbledore's writing. The parchment was full of notes that Dumbledore had taken. Dumbledore had written eight letters at the bottom of the sheet.

SSGGHHRR

"GG stands for Godric Gryffindor. SS, Salazar Slytherin. HH, Helga Hufflepuff and RR is Rowena Ravenclaw" Harry spoke to himself.

"Why them, I mean why the founders of Hogwarts" Damien asked.

"They weren't only the founders of Hogwarts, but were very powerful people. Their raw magical power was something many wizards can't compete with, even today. Voldemort must have used something belonging to each of them. It makes sense. He would want something that represents power" Harry finished.

Harry switched off the globe and looked at the four teens before him.

"I have to figure out where these Horcruxes are before the Order does" Harry said quietly.

“How are we going to find out what they are? There has to be over 100 items that are said to belong to the founders of Hogwarts. How on earth are we going to even begin to track all of them?” Ginny asked.

“Look, this is Voldemort we’re talking about. If he was going to put a piece of his soul into an object, you can bet he’ll put it into an object which has a great history of power. There are a lot of items that are said to belong to the four founders, when in fact they are just fake. I can easily solve this. All I have to do is firstly separate the fake from the genuine. Then the items themselves are going to be exceptional. Voldemort wouldn’t take anything less.”

“The founders of Hogwarts! I still can’t believe it. Why Hogwarts?” Ron said with a look of surprise.

“Like I already said! They weren’t just the founders of Hogwarts. They were the few who were exceptionally powerful. It makes sense that he would choose objects that belonged to them. Also, Voldemort always felt close to Hogwarts. It was a place he felt he belonged. Even now, he never wanted to take Hogwarts to destroy it, but to make it his own. Father was very close to Hogwarts. In fact, he even tried to get a job there” Harry said, remembering the time Voldemort had told him that particular story.

Harry stopped talking as he saw the look on Damien’s face. Harry realised that he had called Voldemort ‘father’ without really meaning to. Harry was trying so hard to call Voldemort by his name, but it just slipped out.

“What post did he go for?” asked Ron, completely oblivious to the tension that had built in the room.

“What do you think, Ronald?” Hermione said with a look of annoyance on her face.

“Defence against the Dark Arts” Ginny finished, as Ron was still looking lost.

The silence in the room was very unnerving. Damien cleared his throat to speak.

“So, what objects do you think he used to make Horcruxes?”

“Well I guess that’s were we come in again” Hermione said, somewhat cheerily.

“We can do some research in what genuine items belonged to the founders and where they are placed. From that we can possibly work out what could be most likely to be made into a Horcrux” Hermione continued.

Harry looked uneasy but shrugged his shoulders in response.

“Fine, wait for my call, before meeting me” Harry said as the four teens gathered their belongings to leave.

XX

Three weeks went by, and the five teens continued to meet regularly. There were many, many items that were said to belong to the founders of Hogwarts. 120 items in total, a much blustered Hermione told the other four teens.

"I don't know how we're going to possibly narrow this down, it's just too much!" she told everyone on their last meeting.

“All we have to do is cross the ones that are definitely not Horcruxes, off the list. You know the ones that are not exceptional enough. Then we can concentrate on the ones that are more probable” Damien suggested.

So, they started making a list. Hermione had done well. She had managed to get to the wizard library in Diagon Alley. Hermione and Ron had managed to get many books on the history of the four founders of Hogwarts, along with as much information as possible on the many objects held in various locations that were of some magical importance.

After a gruelling three hours, they finally had some luck.

“Look at this! This here” Ginny exclaimed excitedly.

"The most famous object belonging to Helga Hufflepuff was the Hufflepuff family heirloom, passed through all the generations. The Hufflepuff heirloom is a small silver cup with the family carving of a badger. It is one of the most expensive heirlooms in our time" Ginny finished reading the excerpt and looked at Harry.

"This has to be one. There is nothing much else that belongs to Hufflepuff, that could be used as a Horcrux. The only other things belonging to Hufflepuff are from the time, when she was actually running Hogwarts" Ginny spoke directly to Harry.

Harry took the book from Ginny and looked at the excerpt for himself. Ginny was right. This fitted the description perfectly. Hermione was quickly looking through another book.

"No, it can't be" she said with a sigh.

"What?" Harry and Ginny asked at the same time.

"The cup, it can't be a Horcrux" Hermione continued.

"Why not?" Ron asked looking at Hermione with confusion.

"Because it's kept at the Ministry of Magic. It's always been there" Hermione said as she lifted up her book and showed an article listing all the important possessions in the safe custody of the Ministry.

The four teens seem to deflate a little. They had come so close to identifying a Horcrux, only to get it shot down. Harry however was looking closely at the article. Suddenly Harry started laughing. Hermione, Ron, Ginny and Damien looked at Harry with slightly worried expressions.

"Um...Harry! Are you okay?" Damien asked.

Harry calmed down a little and looked at Damien, still smiling.

"It's perfect! Can't you see, Damy? The cup is in the safest place. The Ministry itself. No one, not even Dumbledore would think about checking the Ministry for Horcruxes. There are plenty of spies in the Ministry. Voldemort could have easily got someone to pick up the cup,

and then replace it afterwards. The cup is definitely a Horcrux.” Harry told the stunned teens.

“Okay, but how in Merlin’s name are we supposed to get into the Ministry to destroy the cup” Ginny asked.

“You guys are going nowhere. Your help is restricted to the information gathering stage. I’m not allowing any of you to accompany me when I’m actually going to destroy the Horcrux.” Harry said at once.

No one argued with him. They knew better than to push their luck.

“Okay, so how are **you** going to get into the Ministry?” Damien asked rather cheekily.

“Harry seemed to be lost in his thoughts for a moment. His eyes sparkled for a second before he looked up at Damien. He smiled and asked a puzzled Damien.

“When’s the next Quidditch match?”

xx

James was more than surprised when Damien approached him the night before. He had managed to win two tickets to the Quidditch match the next day.

“What do you say dad? Ron’s going to be going as well. You and me, at the game tomorrow. What do you think?” Damien had asked him

“Damy, I don’t think I can concentrate on a game tomorrow. I’ve got so much going on just now. With work and the Order and I’m running out of time to get to Harry as well. No, No Damy, I’m sorry. I’m just not in the mood” James replied.

“Oh, come on dad! You owe me a game. Remember the Bulgaria and Ireland game? Please, dad. You need to relax a little. It’s just one game” After a good two hours of pleading and emotional blackmailing, Damien had managed to convince his dad into going.

Chapter Forty One

Lord Voldemort had not thought it was possible to get more worked up than he was at the moment. It had been over one month since his incompetent Death Eaters had lost Harry and still, they had no clues as to where he was. Voldemort couldn't afford to lose anymore time. He was going to lose this war without Harry, and if things kept on going as they were just now, the other side would get to Harry before they did.

However, Lord Voldemort still didn't admit that a bigger part of him just wanted Harry back with him for reasons other than war. He did miss Harry, but that stunt he pulled with his Horcrux was eating away at Voldemort. Never in his life did he expect Harry to do something like that. But Voldemort knew that Harry had no idea about what the other Horcruxes were, so Voldemort didn't have to worry about that. Harry would be severely punished before having his memory modified.

This was another thing that was making the Dark Lord angry. Too much time had passed to simply oblivate Harry. Over one month! This meant that Harry had to be captured and be brought to Voldemort. Lord Voldemort would have to perform very powerful memory charms on Harry, since he couldn't risk someone else, playing with Harry's mind. Lord Voldemort knew what information and memories to keep and which ones to erase.

The Dark Lord had just given out his instructions. He was going to grant the person who captured and brought Harry to Lord Voldemort, an increase in power. They would get a surge of pure magic which can be used for almost anything. This got the Death Eaters really excited. Now there was a reward over Harry's head. A reward that greatly surpassed the Ministry's five thousand Galleons. This would give the Death Eaters more of a motivation to catch Harry. Lord Voldemort stood watching his Death Eaters race from the room. 'Soon' Voldemort thought. 'Harry will be back with me, soon'.

xx

Harry entered the building that was the Ministry of Magic. Ron had told Harry all he needed to know about the Ministry building. Ron and

his brothers had visited the building so many times, that they had the place memorised.

After Harry got into the telephone box, he punched in the code that Ron had given him. Ron had memorised the code by watching his father and brother, Percy, use it so many times.

2-4-8-9-3-4-0

Harry punched in the code and at once heard a woman's voice fill the booth.

'Welcome, please state your name and purpose of visit'

Harry cleared his throat and spoke clearly.

"James Potter, Auror, reporting for duty" he said clearly.

Harry didn't really sound like James, but Harry had figured that he wouldn't be talking much when inside, so he would just have to make do with his best imitation of James.

The woman's voice echoed around the booth again.

'Thank you. We hope you enjoy your day at the Ministry of Magic'

A small card popped out of the 'coin return' section and Harry quickly picked the card up. At once the telephone booth began to move. It moved down, going underground. Harry stood still, heart thumping wildly within him. He was breaking into the Ministry. If Harry was caught, he wouldn't see the outside again, ever. Every person inside this building was looking for Harry, and Harry was walking into their building.

'Hope this is worth it' Harry thought to himself.

The telephone booth came to a halt and the door opened. Harry walked into a magnificent hall. It was really big with fireplaces sitting next to one another, covering the entire sides of the hall. There was a desk in the middle and one in the corner. Ron had told Harry that the one in the middle was for visitors to sign in and hand their wands in.

The one in the corner was for the workers of the Ministry. Since James was an Auror he could keep his wand, since he would need it in the case of an emergency.

Harry walked purposefully towards the desk in the corner. He tried to look as normal as possible. He didn't want to look like he didn't know where he was going.

Ron had told him that the person who sat at the desk was called Benjamin Hugh, but everyone called him Benjie. He was a nice guy, but would get upset with colleagues if they didn't ask about his family. He had a wife and three kids, and Damien told Harry that their dad would always ask about Benjie's kids.

Harry walked over to the middle aged man and saw the man, Benjie, smile widely at him.

"Afternoon Mr Potter. How are you today?"

Harry smiled back at Benjie.

"Fine. How are you Benjie? How's the wife and kids?"

"Oh, they're fine. Going on holiday soon" Benjie replied.

"Good, Good. I'm just picking something up. See you later" Harry said and quickly went through the double oak doors.

Harry let out a sigh of relief as he walked into the deserted corridor. Harry was concerned that his father might get into trouble if the Ministry realise that the Hufflepuff cup was missing. But Harry wasn't planning on letting anyone see him, or James rather, picking up the cup or leaving with it. Hopefully, no one will realise what happened to the cup. And if somehow, James was dragged into this, he would have plenty of people vouching for him since he was at a Quidditch game.

Harry hurried along the corridor and went into one of the elevators.

According to the book, that Hermione had, it stated that the Hufflepuff cup was in the safe custody section of the building. That was the only

thing that Ron or Damien couldn't help with. They had no idea where this section was.

Harry went into the elevator and saw the names of the departments. He saw straight away the most probable department. It was named 'Secure and Private, No unauthorised access'. This had to be it.

Harry pressed the button to go up to the 23rd floor. Harry hoped that his plan worked. He didn't want to attract too much attention. The lift opened when Harry was at the 15th floor. A tall man with brown hair and grey eyes came into the elevator. Harry kept his face down. He didn't know how many people James knew and didn't want to get caught out.

"What's the matter, Potter? Trying to keep yourself hidden away these days."

Harry looked up and saw the man was speaking to him.

"What?" Harry replied. Harry could tell, just by the way this man was speaking and looking at him, that he wasn't friends with James.

"Not that I blame you. If I had a murderer for a son, I would be hiding as well" the man continued.

Harry felt like someone had poured ice cold water over him. He couldn't believe what this man had just said. Harry's fists were clenched hard and he took a step nearer to this vile man.

"What? You're going to deck me one, like you did with Keith? I have to remind you Potter, that we're not saying anything wrong. Your son is a killer. You should get used to people calling him that"

Harry was taken aback. His father was going through so much grief because of him. People at his work were insulting him. This Keith person had already suffered because of James and now this idiot was trying to get into trouble as well.

"Maybe, you should keep your mouth shut or someone will shut it for you, permanently" Harry hissed at him.

"Is that a threat?" the man asked.

"Does it sound like one?" Harry answered back.

"You better watch your back, Potter. Not everyone wants the best for you"

Harry rolled his eyes. The stupid man couldn't even threaten someone properly.

"Listen, it's obvious what this is really about. You're jealous because I'm one of the top Aurors and regardless of what's happening in my personal life at home, I will continue to be at the top. If you can't stand the heat, my friend, you should just get out" Harry said with a smirk.

As soon as the last line left Harry's mouth, Harry waved his hand and the man was thrown into the side of the metal elevator. The man was shaken but still conscious.

"What the...What the hell do you think you're doing?" the man exclaimed as he tried to get to his feet.

Harry smirked and leaned forward so that he was looking directly at the man. Harry lowered his glasses so that his emerald eyes shone like emerald jewels. The man opened his mouth in horror.

"You...You! You're him!" he stuttered in shock

"You should really watch your mouth. Next time, a killer might just close it for you, you worthless waste!" Harry said venomously.

Harry stuck the man with the heel of his palm and successfully knocked him onto his back. The befuddled man tried to whip out his wand, but Harry shot his hand across and grabbed the wand from him. The man was still on the ground while Harry pointed the wand in his face.

"Hmm, let's see now. What should I do with a pathetic excuse of a wizard? Let's see." Harry mocked.

Harry smirked and waved the wand once.

The man started to shrink and soon there was a small dung beetle sitting in the man's place.

"Perfect" Harry smirked as the transfigured wizard scuttled across the metal floor of the elevator, in a bid to keep itself from being squashed.

"Now, you're free to act like you were. It's more fitting in your current state." Harry laughed.

Soon the dung beetle slipped past the doors of the elevator. It served him right for talking like that to James, Harry thought to himself. It was only a transfiguration spell and it would wear off after a few hours. There was also a protection spell built in with that particular spell. It meant that while the person was transfigured into an animal, or in this case, an insect, they wouldn't be harmed. So even if someone stepped on that dung beetle, he wouldn't be killed, just hurt.

"At least he'll stay away from the Potters now" Harry muttered to himself.

Harry had arrived on the 23rd floor. Harry slipped out as soon as the doors opened. Harry was glad to see that the corridor was empty. Harry took a deep breath and slipped on the invisibility cloak. He saw the doors leading to the storage chambers. Harry saw that there was four Aurors positioned in front of the doors. He really hoped this would work. If any of these men could detect the invisibility cloak then Harry would have to go to plan B and that included a lot of dead Aurors. He would rather not do that at such a delicate time.

Harry pointed the wand over at the opposite corner and caused the window to smash. Two of the Aurors went immediately into fighting mode and ran towards the window, with their wands drawn, ready to see what the commotion was about. The other two moved in front of the doors, protecting them further. Harry moved slowly towards them. It was apparent that they couldn't see him. He moved forward until he was standing right in front of the two Aurors. Trying to be as silent as possible, Harry removed the small bottle within his robes. Without taking his eyes away from the two Aurors, Harry opened the bottle. At once a shrieking sound filled the corridor. The two Aurors jumped and

in the midst of their initial shock, Harry slipped past them and cracked the door open. The shrieking bottle was thrown in front of the Aurors who couldn't see where the sound was coming from. Harry slipped past the door and moved inside. Harry kept the cloak on and ran forward. He saw that the chamber was filled with rows and rows of shelves. Harry moved forward until he saw the small silver cup sitting in the third Row. It was encased in a glass jar and was looking pretty magnificent.

Harry almost felt sorry, that he had to destroy it. Harry pulled off his cloak. He moved his hand over the jar and felt the protection spells put in place. Harry moved his hand over the jar. This had to be done wandlessly, otherwise the use of the wand would set off the alarm bells. This was just like unlocking a door, wandlessly. You just needed to know, what locks to pick. Harry closed his eyes and concentrated on the magic before him. He picked up the magical bonds right away. It took three minutes of pure concentration, but finally Harry had neutralised the magic before him. He heard the click that signalled the spell had been deactivated.

Harry lifted the glass jar and pulled out the silver cup. As soon as Harry's fingers touched the cup, his scar seared with pain. Harry bit his lip to stop any sound escaping him. Harry's scar had been playing up ever since he destroyed the Slytherin pendant. It was now a more regular pain, but it seemed to dull down at times. Harry had realised that with him gone, Voldemort was probably angrier than usual.

"Definitely a Horcrux" Harry muttered to himself as he rubbed at his scar.

He put the cup away safely in his robes pocket. Harry slipped on the invisibility cloak and moved discreetly towards the door. He was just in time as he saw three aurors move inside the chamber.

'Crap' thought Harry as he moved out of the way. The Aurors were firing jets of blue lights that were illuminating different objects. It was obvious that they were trying to do a locator spell, to see if anyone had come inside. Problem was that they didn't know who had entered, so the locator spell was just being fired randomly. Harry tightened his grip on the cloak and moved quickly, dodging the jets of blue light. If

those lights hit Harry, he would be illuminated, so everyone would be able to see him.

Harry moved at an incredible speed, and soon had managed to slip past the three Aurors. Harry saw that one Auror was still stationed outside. Harry slipped past him and very slowly crept towards the stairs. Harry didn't realise he was holding his breath until he reached the stairs. His chest ached from holding his breath for so long. Harry let out a breath of relief.

Harry hurried down the stairs and went down a few floors before using the elevator to go down to the main floor, the cup tucked away safely in his pocket. Harry couldn't believe he had managed to get this far, without having any major problems.

XX

Damien and Ron couldn't believe their luck. The game that they had gone to was over in 40 minutes. The stupid Seeker had caught the Snitch in record time and the game was over, even before it had properly started. They were on their way home and Damien and Ron were praying that either Harry had already succeeded and left the Ministry or that James was not going to go into work.

“Dad, don’t you think we should all go out for Dinner tonight?” Damien asked his dad, as they drove home.

“Yeah, if you want. I guess it’ll be nice for your mum. She’s been quite stressed lately” James said quietly.

“Good. I think that you should come home and tell her yourself. She always gets excited when you come home and surprise her” Damien said quickly.

“Alright” James chuckled.

Damien and Ron leant back in their seats, glad that James was going straight back to Godric's Hollow.

Just as the two boys were getting carried away with their own conversation, Ron looked past Damien and let out a gasp.

“What?” Damien asked

“Look!” Ron hissed back at him.

Damien whipped around and saw to his horror that they had arrived outside the Ministry of Magic. Their car was heading towards the phone box that was used to enter the building.

“Dad! What are you doing? I thought you weren’t going into work today” Damien asked in his most faked calm voice.

“I’m not due in for work. I’m just going to pop in for a second. I have to pick something up” James replied as he parked his car.

Ron and Damien shared a panicked look. What were they going to do now? Their job was to keep James away from the Ministry. They couldn’t let him go in now. Harry was probably still in there.

“Oh, okay” Damien said to James and turned to Ron to mouth the words ‘Oh holy crap’. The red haired boy was also looking ready to collapse in sheer panic.

“Mr Potter, is it okay if we have a quick word with you about something before you go in?”

James parked the car and turned to look at the two boys sitting in the back seat.

“Sure”

Ron looked at Damien, obviously suggesting that Damien had something to say. James looked at his youngest son.

“Something wrong, Damy?” James asked.

Damien shot a glare at Ron and then turned to look at his father.

“Um...yeah. Actually I don’t know how to say this, but, um...” Damien was trying to get his frazzled mind to work and think up a good distraction.

“Damy, is it really important, or can it wait until we get home?” James asked as got ready to open the door and get out of the car.

“NO! I mean, I have to speak to you about it. If Mum finds out, I don’t think she’ll understand” Damien blurted out. That got James’s attention. He turned around so that he was facing Damien fully.

“Damy, what’s wrong?” he asked, genuinely concerned now.

Damien cringed. He was upsetting his dad, without really needing to.

“Um, you see. It’s like this. Um, I kind of like this person. I know that you said that I can’t date anyone until I’m a little older, so I didn’t really approach this person. But now we’ve left Hogwarts and I don’t know if I’ll ever get the chance to ask now” Damien decided to go for the half truth.

“Oh! Okay, who is this person” James asked with a smile.

“Well, it’s um, Sam. I really like Sam and I think that...” Damien was cut off by James’s cough.

“Sam! You like someone named Sam!” James asked.

“Yeah” Damien said quickly, unsure of why the colour seemed to have drained out of his fathers face.

“Oh, um. I think that we should talk about this somewhere else. Not like this” James said, now going pink in the face.

“Dad, I want to talk about this now. Sam only lives across the street. And if you think its okay, I’d like to go over and see her” Damien said grumpily.

“Her! Sam’s a her. Sam’s a she!” James said looking very relieved.

Damien realised what James had thought when he said the name ‘Sam’.

"Yeah, Sam, you know short for Samantha. She came over to our house last July. Remember?" Damien asked, stifling the laugh that was threatening to come out of him.

"Oh, yes, yes. Lovely girl. Lovely girl. I like her. But Damy, you're still a bit young. I think you should be at least fifteen, before you start dating anyone. Okay" James said, now looking very embarrassed. He didn't remember anyone called Samantha, but he was willing to just agree with Damien.

"Alright! But don't tell mum. She'll just tease me. Sam's her best student, you see." Damien explained.

"Don't worry" James replied.

Damien's smile faltered slightly as he caught sight of Harry, looking exactly like their dad, come out of the phone booth. Harry quickly made his way down the crowded street and moments later disappeared.

James got out of his car and told the two boys to behave, while he went into the Ministry. Damien and Ron burst into fits of laughter as soon as James left.

"Crikey, Damy. I thought you were going to give him a heart attack!" Ron exclaimed.

"It's the only thing I could think of. And I wasn't lying. Sam is pretty hot" Damien said slyly.

"She's in my year!" Ron said a little sternly.

"So, I can't like her just because she's three years older" Damien argued back.

"Alright, alright, you can like whoever you like. So, Harry's away then" Ron said looking out the window.

"Yeah, let's just hope everything went according to plan" Damien said quietly.

XX

James went into the main hall and quickly walked towards Benjie.

“Hey Benjie, how are you? How’s the wife and kids?” James asked as he stopped next to the receptionist.

Benjie gave James with an odd look.

“I’m fine Mr Potter. But I think you’re getting a little forgetful. You already asked me how I was this afternoon”

James looked at Benjie with confusion.

“What are you talking about? I just walked in for the first time today.” James said with a laugh.

“No, this is the second time you’ve come here today. In fact, you just left about two minute’s ago. I waved goodbye to you myself” Benjie said, looking a little annoyed with James.

“What are you...?” Suddenly it all made sense to James.

James raced out of the doors without another word. He slammed himself into the telephone booth and willed the stupid machine to go faster. Harry had come to the Ministry. Harry had made himself look like James to get access to the Ministry. Benjie said that he just left a few minutes ago. Maybe James could still catch him.

James raced outside and ran to the corner of the street. His eyes were searching for Harry everywhere, but there was no sign of the raven haired boy. Damien and Ron watched with sinking hearts as James rushed around, obviously looking for someone.

“Deny all knowledge” Ron whispered to Damien as James thundered over to them.

XX

Damien and Ron found themselves sitting in one of the rooms in the Ministry. James didn’t suspect them at all. He had rushed over to the

car and asked both of them to come inside the Ministry. There had been a situation and he had to sort it out before going back home.

To say the situation was tense was an understatement. The entire Ministry was in an uproar that someone had broken into the Ministry, and the fact that it was the Dark Prince who had been the one who broke in, was even more distressing. James had tried to keep things under control but Benjie had already raised the alarm by the time James had come back into the Ministry.

“A boy comes into the Ministry! Comes in at his leisure, does whatever the hell he came to do and leaves without anyone noticing! Explain how this is possible!” Minister Fudge roared.

James winced, not because the Minister was yelling but because there was spit flying everywhere.

‘Which idiot told him’ James thought angrily to himself. He just wanted to know why Harry had come into the Ministry. What purpose was there to do such a dangerous thing? It soon became apparent why Harry had come. After the alarm was raised, all departments were asked if anything out of the ordinary had happened that day. That’s when the Aurors placed on the 23rd Floor had come forward and explained the strange happenings earlier that afternoon. A thorough search later, it was reported that the priceless Helga Hufflepuff cup was missing.

This made things blow out of proportion. Minister Fudge went into a panic at how he was going to explain this. He ordered that the day’s event was not to get out into the wizarding world. Under no circumstance was the wizarding population to find out that the Dark Prince had waltzed into the Ministry and took such a priceless artefact.

James and Sirius were in a panic of their own. Harry had taken such a risk to come into the Ministry. Why? Why did Harry want the Hufflepuff cup? They knew that Dumbledore would have to be informed. Perhaps he could shed some light on this.

Ron and Damien were inside the room, totally oblivious to what was going on outside. They were just glad that the suspicion had not

fallen onto them. They were safe. Suddenly a loud shouting noise caused the two boys to jump and race out of the door. Damien saw his dad and uncle Sirius sharing some very loud words with a tall brown haired man. The man was an Auror, who Damien and Ron recognised as Charles Blake. He was a very arrogant and pompous man who loved getting into fights with other people. He hated James and Sirius, from their days at Hogwarts together. Sirius had once told Damien that he was certain the Blake had only become an Auror to copy him and James.

"I'm telling you, he was here, and I saw him!" Blake shouted in frustration at James.

"Who? Who was here? Talk sense, will you!" James shouted back.

"Your son! He was here. He attacked me!" Blake shouted back. His face was turning purple with rage.

"What are you talking about? If you saw him why did you let him go?" Kingsley Shacklebolt interrupted.

"I would have arrested him! But he...he...I..." Blake seemed to trail away.

It was apparent that whatever Harry had done to keep Blake quiet was greatly affecting him. The truth was that Blake was embarrassed about getting turned into a dung beetle. If that truth came out, he would never recover from it. So he decided to just turn and stomp away. He threw James a dirty glare before turning away. He swore to himself that he would get his own back even if it was the last thing he did.

xx

Harry had opened the door to his room and came inside. He locked the door and went to his bed. He took out the cup and held it in his hand. It seemed that Voldemort had calmed down, since Harry's scar didn't hurt this time. Harry examined the cup. It truly was beautiful. Harry found himself drawn to the cup, much the same way he was drawn to the Slytherin pendant. Harry tore his eyes away from the cup and placed the cup on the bed next to him.

Chapter Forty Two

There weren't a lot of things that could leave Albus Dumbledore speechless, but after listening to James and Sirius, Dumbledore found himself unable to utter a single word. He would never have imagined Harry to walk into the heart of the Ministry so easily. Harry was still somewhat of a mystery to Dumbledore. Every time Dumbledore thought he had worked that boy out, he would go and do something like this to completely throw everyone off.

The thing that Dumbledore found more interesting than anything else, was the item that he took, Helga Hufflepuff's cup. Why the cup? What was it about that particular object that made Harry take such a risk? Dumbledore knew that it simply couldn't be the value of the cup. There were plenty of other things in much less guarded places that would supply Harry with plenty of money. No, it had to be something else.

Dumbledore leant back in his chair and closed his blue eyes. Could it be? Was it possible that the Hufflepuff cup was a Horcrux? That would make sense. Harry took the cup because it was a Horcrux. But how did Voldemort get his hands on the cup? However he managed to do it, Voldemort must have used the cup to make a Horcrux. That was why Harry stole the cup! It had to be. It was the only thing that Dumbledore could think of that would justify Harry breaking into the Ministry. Dumbledore opened his eyes and let out a sigh.

"I think I know why Harry came to the Ministry" Dumbledore said in a tired voice.

James, Sirius, Remus and Lily all whipped around at once.

"Harry came to take Hufflepuff's cup. That much we all know. But I think the real question is why he took the cup." Dumbledore paused for a moment.

"The cup was a Horcrux" Dumbledore said simply.

The gasps that followed these words would have been humorous if the situation wasn't so tense.

"How...how do you know this? How can you be certain?" Lily asked.

"I can't be certain. However it is the only thing that makes sense. Voldemort has many spies amongst the wizarding world. I have always been wary of the fact that the Ministry has some as well. It is possible that Voldemort used one of his spies to steal the cup and then put it back again. It is rather ingenious. Voldemort's Horcrux, lying in the heart of the Ministry. The very Aurors trying to finish him are keeping a part of him safe from the outside."

James and Sirius were looking a bit sick and pale at Dumbledore's words.

"So, so you think Harry took the cup because he found out it was a Horcrux?" James asked.

"I believe that may be the case" Dumbledore replied.

"So, Harry's after the Horcruxes as well." Sirius asked.

"Since Harry ran away from Voldemort, I was wondering what Harry was planning on doing. Harry feels that he can't come home, to his real home because of his past. He can't restart his life in the wizarding world because everyone recognises him as the Dark Prince and would hand him over to the Ministry. Harry is not one to run away and live his life as a muggle. So that didn't leave much else. Now I understand what Harry is doing. He's taking his revenge. Harry is going after the Horcruxes as an act of revenge on Voldemort" Dumbledore explained.

James and Lily could feel their hearts thumping wildly in their chests. Harry was going against Voldemort so boldly, as to destroy his Horcruxes. Instead of feeling proud or glad that Harry had finally gone against Voldemort, both parents felt true fear. If Harry was caught by the Death Eaters, what would Voldemort do to him? Snape had said that Voldemort wanted Harry back to modify his memories and have Harry back as the Dark Prince. Voldemort might have raised Harry like a son and like Dumbledore suggested, might have a soft spot for him, but what would the Dark Lord do to a boy who destroyed one or more of his beloved Horcruxes? James didn't even want to think about it.

Harry stopped rubbing his eyes and looked at Damien. Ron, Hermione and Ginny stopped and watched Harry for his reaction.

“That wand is special” Harry answered simply.

“What’s so special about it?” Damien pushed.

Harry gave an inward sigh and looked at Damien.

“That wand was specially prepared for me. No one else can use that wand. It will only respond to me. Even though it can be tracked by Voldemort, I’ve altered it slightly so that I can do certain spells without getting caught out” Harry answered.

“What kind of spells?” Damien asked at once.

“Just simple things, not anything like the Unforgivable curses, just things like summoning spells or transfiguration spells or things like that” Harry answered.

Damien went quiet. It was apparent that Harry really needed this wand. He had been living without using magic for so long now.

“Did you say, transfiguration spells?” Ginny asked.

Harry didn’t even look over at Ginny. The last couple of weeks had meant Harry spending a lot of time with the four teens. The result was that the four teens were becoming quite open and much at ease with Harry. No one had relaxed so drastically as much as Ginny Weasley. At first she would hardly speak, but now she was quite comfortable talking and asking Harry questions all the time. Something Harry was beginning to regret.

“Yeah, transfiguration spells, why?” Harry said without even looking up at Ginny.

“Well, it’s just that you don’t really need a wand for that, you can transfigure pretty much anything” she said simply.

Harry lifted his head and looked at the red headed girl.

“I can’t transfigure myself though. Objects I can control and manipulate, but in order to change my own appearance I have to use my wand”

Understanding hit home to the four teens. Of course! That was why Harry was walking around looking like himself. He wasn’t able to change his appearance. He couldn’t do a glamour spell wandlessly. If Harry got his wand back, he would be a lot safer since he would be able to change his appearance and therefore would be able to hide more easily.

“Right, so I’ll meet you at Godric’s Hollow day after tomorrow then” Harry said to Damien.

Harry couldn’t wait to get his wand back. It had been a very long time for Harry to be without his magic

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Damien couldn’t believe how easy it was to slip away in the midst of Bill and Fleur’s wedding. All the adults were so engrossed in the happenings of the wedding that no one noticed Damien slipping into the house and using the Floo system to go back to Godric’s Hollow.

Damien brushed the soot away from his dress robes as he stepped into his living room. He quickly went to the back door of the house. Just as planned, Harry was waiting for him. The two boys slipped into the house and began the search for Harry’s wand.

Damien felt the familiar pull of guilt weighing him down. This was the second time Harry had come to Godric’s Hollow and both times Damien knew about it when his parents didn’t. But Damien also knew that Harry couldn’t be forced into coming home. There was no point in making Harry stay in a place he wasn’t comfortable in staying.

They searched the whole house until Harry finally managed to find his wand, concealed in a hidden drawer behind the actual chest of drawers. It wouldn’t have been found if Harry hadn’t accidentally stumbled across it.

Harry held the black wooden wand in his hand and at once felt the magic within in rush into him. Damien couldn't help smiling at the sight of Harry. It really was bizarre how attached a witch or wizard became to their wand. In Harry's case, that wand had been responsible for saving Harry's life many times. Plus, Harry had somehow managed to alter the magical core, so that it would respond to him alone and Harry could also use it to a certain extent, and not be tracked down by Voldemort. That summoned up the wand to be, well, priceless to Harry.

"Now what?" Damien asked as Harry pocketed his wand.

"Now you go back to the Weasley's, I've got a few things to do" Harry answered as both boys walked to the back door.

Damien noticed how unresponsive Harry was to his surroundings. This was his home but yet, Harry didn't show any interest in it.

"Harry, can I ask you something?" Damien said, making up his mind to ask Harry about this.

"Hmm" Harry answered as he peeked out of the window, to make sure no one was around, before he walked out.

"Do you...I mean, if you had a choice...would...would you want to come home?" Damien asked.

Harry stopped looking outside and faced the younger teen.

"Why do you ask?"

"It's just...I thought you would be, affected by Godric's hollow. You know, since it's our home and everything, but you just don't seem to care" Damien said a little saddened.

"Just because I don't say anything doesn't mean I don't feel anything. I would come home if I could. It's just not possible, so I don't waste time in thinking about it and making regrets. It won't help" Harry said a little annoyed at Damien's childish behaviour.

"Right, yeah. Sorry, I just wanted to ask, sorry" Damien apologised.

Harry did another check of the outside before instructing Damien to Floo back to the Weasley's. Harry quietly left Godric's Hollow to head back to his room in 'Harley's Travel Inn'.

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As soon as Damien came back to the Burrow, he knew something had gone terribly wrong. Instead of the sound of pleasant chatting and laughing voices, there were terrified shouts. Fleur was standing quite still and watched as members of the Order yelled amongst themselves.

At first Damien couldn't understand what the adults were shouting about, then certain words got through Damien's shocked system.

"Attacked...have to help...Dumbledore's just left...can't reach him...around fifty Death Eaters...have to do something!"

Damien felt his heart sink into his stomach. There had been an attack and the members of the Order were trying to get together and provide back up for the Ministry Aurors. Damien's eyes scanned his surroundings and at once he saw his father and two Godfathers standing amongst the crowd. They had their wands already drawn.

Damien hurried over to his group of friends.

"What happened?" he asked as soon as he approached the three worried looking teens.

"Thank God you're back! I can't believe this is happening!" Ginny whispered in a worried voice to him.

"What happened, what's going on?" Damien asked again.

"There's been an attack! It's horrible. The Death Eaters have killed at least two hundred people! Professor Dumbledore is missing as well. He left the wedding shortly after you left. He said it was an urgent call and he had to leave, then twenty minutes later the news came that there had been an attack. No one is able to contact Dumbledore, don't know where he is" Ron finished.

Damien felt his mouth dry up at the news. Two hundred casualties! Nothing had been this serious before. He caught sight of his father giving his mum a hug before sweeping towards the gates, with Arthur, Sirius, Remus, Kingsley and many other Order members behind him. Damien saw another figure step towards the gate, but a muffled yell stopped him. Damien realised that Bill was also following the other Aurors.

“Bill! You can’t! You can’t leave today, it’s your wedding day! You’re not even an Auror!” Mrs Weasley was screaming at her son.

“Mum, I can’t just stay back. I may not be an Auror, but I am a Wizard who is more than capable of helping. I’m going” Bill responded.

Before Mrs Weasley could argue, Fleur stepped towards her newly wed husband. Her beautiful face was laced with fear and sorrow as she looked desperately into Bill’s eyes.

“I have to Fleur, you must understand. It’s my duty. Please, let me go. I promise I will return.” Bill pleaded with his wife. Fleur bowed her head and silently stepped out of his way. The look in her blue eyes was clear.

‘You must return’.

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When the members of the Order finally reached the location where the Ministry Aurors were getting slaughtered by the Death eaters, their first thought was how hopeless the situation was. There were just too many of them. The ground was splattered with the blood of the innocent and everywhere they looked they saw nothing but devastation. This used to be a small peaceful wizarding village but now it was nothing more than a burning wreck.

James sprung into action at once. He started duelling with a group of three Death Eaters, successfully bring them down. For the first time in a long while, did James feel the rush of rage run through him as he cast the killing curse on the Death Eaters. He didn’t care about arresting them and putting them on trial. They deserved to die, all of them.

James didn't know where the other Aurors were or what they were doing. All he could think about was the bodies of the innocent victims scattered everywhere. There were young men amongst the corpses, women, even young children! It caused the end to any rational thinking James might have possessed. He fired the killing curse at every Death Eater he came across and successfully blocked the multitude of curses flying at him.

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Damien sat with Hermione, Ginny and Ron at one of the tables. The atmosphere was heavy with worry and misery. 'Some wedding day', Damien thought sadly as he looked over at the tearful bride. Fleur was being comforted by her family, while the other guests were trying to calm down a distraught Mrs Weasley. Arthur, Charlie and Bill had all left to help fight the Death Eaters. The twins wanted to go and help as well but were held back since they didn't have as much experience in real life duelling.

"Do...do you think we should let him know?" Ginny whispered quietly.

"I was thinking the same thing" Ron answered.

"We have the phone. We could send him a written message. Maybe he could help" Ron continued.

"We can't" Hermione whispered back urgently.

"Why not?" Damien asked, he knew that Harry would be furious if they didn't inform him about the attack. Maybe Harry could help fight the Death eaters.

"Think about it! If *he* finds out then *he* will want to go and help. That will mean that the *he* will have a good chance of getting caught by the Death Eaters or the Ministry. Even if he does a glamour spell, the risk of getting caught is too high. We'll be endangering him. The Order will be able to handle this. There should be no need for him to get involved." Hermione finished.

Damien sat silently analysing Hermione's words. She was right. It was too risky. What if Harry got caught accidentally? There are many

spells that could indirectly remove glamour spells. Harry would be at too much of a risk! No it was better and safer for Harry to keep out of this. Besides, Dumbledore would be informed sooner or later. Everything would work out in the end, Damien hoped.

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James was successfully duelling with the Death Eaters. His rage had given him a new found strength. Suddenly, James felt a curse hit his shield and caused it to shudder. His shield only just managed to stay in place. James turned around to face the person responsible for sending such a curse. James knew that only very few wizards would be able to cast such a powerful curse, one of them was Dumbledore and the other one...James whipped around and saw the crimson eyes glistening with malice. Voldemort!

James lost any anger that was within him. Instead he was filled with pure rage. The hatred he had for this man was so intense that James felt the ground shake beneath his feet. Voldemort saw the rage in James's eyes and smirked at him. James felt a jolt of fury rush through him as Voldemort's smirk reminded him strongly of Harry.

"I don't usually have such an effect on everyone. You must have some very strong feelings about me" Voldemort said calmly, referring to the shaking of the ground.

James barely managed to speak, due to the anger coursing through him.

"Not everyone has suffered at your hands like I have" James spat at him.

"Really, I don't remember ever laying my hands on you. Rest assured if I had, you wouldn't be standing here today." Voldemort continued in is sickly calm voice.

James clenched his teeth in anger as he stepped towards the Dark Lord. This man was the reason James's family was incomplete. He was the reason Harry grew up with no childhood. He was the reason Harry was forced to endure horrific abuse, Harry was a wanted

wizard with no possible future, because of this man. James gripped his wand tightly.

“Physical abuse is nothing compared to the wounds that you have given me!” James said, ready to dodge any curse that Voldemort might send his way, but the Dark Lord seemed to be enjoying the conversation and didn’t look like he was planning on firing any curses at James.

“You took away my son! You made him into a murderer. You stole his childhood and destroyed his future! These are the worst wounds you could give to a father”

Voldemort smiled again, obviously enjoying James’s distress.

“So what now, Potter? Do you have a little revenge planned?” Voldemort taunted as he saw James tighten his grip on his wand.

It was James’s turn to smile.

“No need. It seems fate has already begun its revenge on you. You stole my son from me. Fate has taken him away from you too.”

Voldemort’s smile disappeared from his face as he stood still, listening to James’s words. James smiled again and continued.

“I had to suffer, but now you’re suffering in that same way. You might have taken Harry for another purpose, but you made the mistake of becoming close to him. You actually began to care for him. Harry became your *son*. And now Harry has left *you* and will never willingly return to you! You have lost a son just the way I did”

James didn’t even see the wand being whipped out and aimed at him. James only realised what had happened as he felt the intense pain of the crucio curse being cast on him. James hit the ground but refused to cry out in pain. Voldemort lifted the curse and stared at the man before him.

“How dare you! You dare to insult me! You know nothing about me and you don’t know Harry either. He will come back to me. Once he has calmed down, he will return” Voldemort declared, a strange

gleam in his ruby red eyes. He cast the crucio curse on James again. But this time James was ready. James threw himself out of the way and threw a curse at Voldemort. This only enraged the Dark Lord and he once again had James on the ground, twitching and trembling in pain.

James sat up after the curse was removed. His limbs were aching and he couldn't stop the cry of pain escaping his lips as he tried to move. He looked at Voldemort and laughed softly as he slowly stood up, wiping blood away from his mouth.

"You're the one who doesn't know Harry. Harry is my blood. He will forever be known as my son. Harry.James.Potter! That is his identity. You took him away from me, but couldn't stop him from growing up to look exactly like me. You took away his innocence, but you couldn't take away his compassion for others. You tried to teach him all the wrong things, but Harry still managed to learn a few good things. Harry will never be yours, for he will always be a Potter!"

James felt an exploding pain in his leg as Voldemort shattered his bone with a bone breaking curse. James hit the ground and growled at the pain. He knew that he was never going to be able to fight Voldemort. It wasn't possible, but James wanted to say all those things to him, even if it meant a horrible death for him. At least he showed Voldemort, who Harry's true father was.

Voldemort stood before the crumbled body of James. His red eyes had a manic gleam in them. He raised his wand and aimed directly at James's chest. He uttered a curse that made James's mind explode with pain. He screamed in utter agony. James felt like he was being skinned alive. His very skin was burning with pain. His blood was pouring out of his nose and mouth, leading to James gagging and choking on his own blood. Voldemort lifted the curse and looked down at the bloodied form of James Potter

"Too bad you couldn't say bye to your brat then" he said in a voice filled with cruelty.

He aimed the wand at James's head.

"AVADA KEDAVRA!"

Chapter Forty Three

The doors to the elevator opened and Harry hurried out. He rushed along the long corridor that led to the numerous rooms, occupied by the seriously injured witches and wizards. Harry could hear nothing but the roaring of his own blood in his ears. He had known that something horrible had happened as soon as his scar had erupted in pain. Harry had only just recovered from the agonising pain and was trying to calm himself down. His scar hurting was never a good sign.

Harry's suspicions were confirmed when he got a text message from Damien. Harry's heart had stopped as he read the message.

'DAD SERIOUSLY HURT, COME TO ST MUNGO'S, ASAP'

Harry looked frantically for any sign of Damien, or even his mum. He couldn't see anyone. Harry turned the corner and saw the form of his younger brother, sitting with his head in his hands. He was alone. Harry quickly rushed over to him. Damien looked up as he heard the rushed footsteps coming towards him. Harry knew that Damien wouldn't recognise him as he was wearing a glamour charm to disguise himself. Harry would not have been able to come to St Mungo's Hospital without a glamour charm.

Harry took out his wand and quickly removed the glamour, so that Damien could recognise him. Harry hurried along the corridor as he saw Damien rise out of his seat and rush over to him. Both brothers threw their arms around each other. Harry could see how distressed Damien was as he noticed his tear stained cheeks. Damien was still sobbing into Harry's shoulder. Harry pulled him away gently and had to fight back the emotions stirring within him. 'If Damien was crying, did that mean that James had...'

"Damy, what happened?" Harry managed to choke out.

"I...I don't know! The Healers are in with dad...mum, uncle Siri and Moony are in with them as well. They just rushed in about a second before you came. I don't know, Harry! Dad's lost so much blood! He...He didn't look...he didn't look alive!" Damien dissolved into tears again.

Harry stood still as he listened to Damien. He could feel his heart hammering against his chest.

“Damy, do you what happened to him? How did he get injured?” Harry asked.

Damien told Harry everything that happened when he got back to the Burrow. Harry listened quietly, feeling his stomach lurch at the details of the attack by the Death Eaters.

“Uncle Siri said that dad was duelling with...with...him. He did this to him! He was about to kill him, but Professor Dumbledore came just in time. The killing curse was about to hit dad, but Professor Dumbledore saved him. Uncle Siri said that Professor Dumbledore had summoned dad out of the way of the killing curse. If he didn’t do that on time, dad would have been killed!” Damien said in a horse voice.

Harry knew who ‘he’ was that Damien was referring to. Damien was referring to Voldemort. James had been attacked and nearly killed by Voldemort! Harry felt a strange emotion bubble inside him. He hated Dumbledore. He hated him for trying to use him, just like Voldemort had. Harry saw no difference in the two wizards. Both wanted power and both were willing to use and sacrifice him in the process. But now this wizard had saved Harry’s father’s life.

“Why are you alone? Where are your friends?” Harry asked, angry that his brother was left alone at such a distressing time.

“They’re on the upper floor. Bill, Ron’s brother, he’s really hurt as well. He’s in surgery just now” Damien replied sadly.

“Bill! Is he the one who...” Harry started but found he couldn’t really finish.

“Yeah, he’s the one who got married today. He promised Fleur, his wife, that he would return. He did return but his face...he’s horribly disfigured, Harry. He’s really badly hurt. They’re still trying to get all the glass out of his body.”

Before Harry could say anything he heard the sound of footsteps approaching. Harry quickly cast the glamour charm again. Harry's clothes changed into the uniform of the St Mungo's staff. He quickly stepped past Damien and pretended to check the documents posted outside the rooms.

Lily, Sirius and Remus stepped outside onto the corridor, Lily ran and embraced Damien, crying softly. Sirius and Remus were looking deathly pale.

"Mum! How is he? Mum! What's wrong?" Damien asked fearfully.

"We don't know yet, Damsy, Healer Davis is still attending to him." Sirius said as he pulled the sobbing Lily away from the distressed teen.

Harry watched everything a few feet away. He felt his heart ache as he saw the crying figure of his mother. He wanted to be there for her, but he knew that even if that were possible, he wouldn't really know how to comfort her.

A few minutes later, Healer Davis walked out of a room. The three adults and Damien stood up at once and rushed over to the Healer. Harry was standing just around the corner, listening to the news that the Healer was about to give.

"Healer Davis! How is he? Is he going to be okay?" Lily asked at once.

Harry peeked around the corner and saw the middle aged Healer look at Lily with sad eyes.

"I'm really sorry Mrs Potter, but your husband is showing no improvement. He was hit with a very dark curse, the *Markiline* curse. It strips the victim of their magic. It leaves them with very little or no magical stores. As you all are aware, healing can only be done if the patient uses the magic within them to heal their body and mind. Unfortunately, Mr Potter has very little magic left within him so he's not responding to any of our healing charms or potions. His body isn't able to sustain itself until his magic replenishes itself. I really am very sorry, Mr Potter won't make it through the night"

Harry felt his knees weaken as he heard the last few words come out of the Healer's mouth. James was going to die! He wasn't going to make it!

Harry saw the others reactions in slow motion. Lily was looking wide eyed at the Healer, her emerald eyes filling with angry tears. She started shaking her head and murmuring something. Harry could just make out her muffled words. 'No, no, no, it's not true! It can't be! He won't leave me, he can't leave me'

Sirius and Remus both grabbed the Healer by his white robes and started yelling at him.

"What do you mean, he won't make it! Of courses he'll make it" Sirius yelled at once.

"You have to do something Healer Davis, James has got a family! He's got a wife and two kids. You can't give up on him" Remus cried out.

"I really am sorry, but like I said, it's hopeless. There is nothing we can do. I am sorry" Healer Davis said as he gently pulled Sirius's hands away from his collar.

"What if someone else was to donate their magic to James? He would be okay then, right? He could survive" Lily said at once.

The Healer shook his head sadly.

"That wouldn't be possible. Firstly the donor wouldn't survive the transfer. To give your magic to someone is a very painful and dangerous thing to do. Our magic is linked to our life source. In addition to this, the amount of magic needed for Mr Potter is of such an amount that there is no way anyone could give that much. Lastly, if someone could afford to take a chance to do the transfer, then they would have to be a blood relative. Only a blood relative would be able to donate their magic, as both the magical cores have to be very similar before this would work."

Damien opened his mouth, obviously to offer his magic.

“Sorry son, you’re too young. You don’t even have your full magic yet. The transfer will kill you and it won’t even be enough to save your father.” The Healer said sympathetically.

Harry could see the tears falling from Damien’s hazel eyes as he nodded his head reluctantly. The Healer walked away, saying that St Mungo’s had over four hundred casualties due to this attack. He had to attend to them. As the Healer walked away, Lily turned around and hugged Damien before letting out a heartbreaking cry. Both mother and son collapsed onto the ground and cried in each others arms. Sirius and Remus both swallowed their tears before attempting to comfort the distraught woman and teen.

Harry felt his heart ache horribly as he watched his mother and brother cry over the certain death of his father. Harry wished he could just step out and comfort both of them. He wanted desperately to be with them just now. He watched through tear filled eyes as Sirius lifted Damien off the ground and Remus embraced the sobbing Lily.

“Look what’s happened, Moony. James is going to leave me! He promised he would never leave me. He swore we would live together forever! He can’t leave me, he just can’t” Lily cried hard as Remus hugged her and tried to calm her down. Remus couldn’t find any words to comfort his old friend. What could he say? ‘Everything’s going to be okay?’ how could he even say that? Nothing was going to be okay if James left them.

Sirius was crying as he embraced his younger godson. Damien stole a glance over at Harry. Their eyes met and both boys wordlessly comforted each other. The three adults and teen walked slowly over to the room, where James was. They silently went inside to be with him. Harry turned around and collapsed onto the ground. He sat on the cold floor, resting against the wall. Harry didn’t know what he was feeling. He was in unimaginable pain at the thought of losing James, even though Harry had never really had him in the first place. The sorrow he felt for Damien and Lily was confusing him. He could feel the pain they were feeling. Even the grief of Sirius and Remus was affecting him. But Harry also felt the burning rage and fury directed at the one responsible for all this. Voldemort! He was responsible for this. He did this to James.

Harry wiped the back of his hand over his eyes. Harry knew what he had to do. It was risky and very dangerous, but in Harry's mind, there was no alternative. He wasn't going to lose James.

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Harry checked his glamour was still in place. Harry had made sure he wasn't recognisable. He pointed his wand to his throat and changed his voice. It was lot deeper now. Harry walked purposefully towards the room. He took a deep breath to calm his thumping heart before knocking softly and entering.

The first thing Harry saw was the small group of people around a bed. Harry had to stifle the gasp that came when he saw James lying on the bed. He was deathly pale and was hooked up to a number of machines. Harry cleared his throat and looked directly at Sirius.

"Excuse me, I'm really sorry but I have to ask all of you to step outside for a moment. I have to change one of the machines for Mr Potter." Harry held up a small machine in his hand to let the others see.

Sirius was looking suspiciously at Harry. Damien was looking terrified. He knew it was Harry in disguise. He looked at his mum and gently took her hand, to prompt her to stand.

Before they could leave though, Sirius spoke up.

"What's the point in changing the machines? Healer Davis said there was no hope!" he said angrily.

"There's always hope" Harry said quietly.

"I just have to do the job I've been asked to do, please, if you don't mind. I'll only be a few minutes" Harry said a little louder.

Remus held onto Sirius's arm and gently nudged him out of the room, followed by the weeping Lily and Damien. Harry shared a quick look with Damien before he went out of the room. Harry hoped Damien understood and kept everyone away from the room as long as possible.

Harry quickly locked the door and cast the 'Silencio' charm on the door. He really hoped no one interrupted him. Harry turned around and looked at his father, lying on the bed before him, taking his last breaths. Harry took away the glamour spell and walked over to the bed.

Harry looked down on the figure lying motionless on the bed. One of the machines hooked up to James was showing the current magic level in his body. Harry could see that Healer Davis was right, James had very little magic left in him. Harry knew the spell Voldemort had hit James with. It was a horrible curse and was probably one of the darkest curses you could do.

Harry looked at James's face. Harry felt the lump grow at the back of his throat as he looked intently at the man he had grown up hating. Harry knew all the horrible memories he had of the Potters was a lie, but he couldn't help the emotions that were brought out by them. Harry remembered lying awake at night, when he was a young boy, trying to think of all the things he could do to make his father love him. Harry used to promise to himself that he would behave and he would make his father love him. The heartache of realising that his father always loved him and had never hurt him, was one of the things that made Harry hate Voldemort. Harry took a deep breath and spoke to the still figure of James.

"I don't know if it's true that you can hear others when you're in a coma state. I don't really know if you can hear and understand me, but I don't have any other choice right now. I don't even know what to say." Harry said in a voice that was close to a whisper.

"I grew up hating you. I always wanted to see you destroyed, and I came close to succeeding. Yet, when I see you like this today, I feel like a small part of me is dying as well. I...I don't even know you. I don't know what your favourite food is, or your favourite colour. I don't know what you like doing on the weekends or what your hobbies are. Except one, Quidditch! That's all I know about you. You love Quidditch." Harry had to take a shuddering breath to keep his emotions back.

"I know that I messed up. I had a chance to come back and I blew it. I'm really sorry, God, I'm so sorry. If I could go back in time, I would make everything right, but I can't. Even with all my magic I can't turn back the clock so far. Dad, please give me a chance to get to know you. I know that it's a possibility, a good possibility that I'll never get to know you. I won't survive that long, but I can't live knowing that I'll **never** get a chance to get to know you because your not here anymore. I need that small sliver of hope, to survive."

Harry gripped his wand tightly as he said the last words to James. He transfigured his wand into a knife and stood silently for a moment. He could do this. This was the only thing that could save his father. Harry struggled for a moment, knowing what would happen to him, if this spell worked. As long as he got back to his room in the Travel Inn, he would be alright.

Harry took his father's hand and turned it over so that his palm was facing up.

"From my blood to yours, from my essence to you, I give you my core, so that yours can be restored"

Harry ran the sharp dagger over his palm and made a significant cut across his hand. He did the same to James's palm and saw the small droplets of blood run down the length of his hand. As the last words left Harry's mouth, Harry slammed his injured hand onto James's hand. Both wounds locked with each other and Harry felt a searing pain take hold of him. Harry could hardly keep back the screams as he felt his magic rip from within him and transfer through his wound into James. Harry closed his eyes and grabbed the edge of the bed, to keep from collapsing. He had to keep the connection going until James got the correct amount of magic. Harry was fighting to stay conscious, he had never been in so much pain before. It was unbearable. Harry couldn't keep away the cries of agony anymore and he let out a piercing scream.

He was thankful that the 'Silencio' spell would keep anyone from hearing him. Harry forced his eyes open and looked at James. There was a strange glow around him and the paleness of his skin was changing almost immediately. Harry dragged his eyes to the monitor

James felt his fuzzy mind clear up. He tried opening his eyes but shut them quickly as the bright white light hit his sensitive eyes. James felt as if someone was slowly turning up the volume in the room. At first there was no sound other than the sound of his own heartbeat. Then he heard some whispering sounds, but he couldn't make out what was being said. Then slowly the voices became louder and the words became clearer.

James could hear Lily crying out his name, and he could make out Damien's voice in the background. He wanted to open his mouth and tell them that he was okay, but he couldn't talk as there was something in his mouth. James forced his eyes open and the first thing he could make out was the face of a middle aged man. James blinked a few times to get his vision to clear up a bit. He realised that he didn't have his glasses but he couldn't talk and ask for them.

James heard the middle aged man speak to him.

"Mr Potter, you are at St Mungo's Hospital. I am Healer Davis. Can you hear me?"

James could only nod his head and even doing that caused a shooting pain to run through him. James lifted his hand gingerly and tried to pull, whatever was in his mouth so that he could speak. He was very shocked to realise that there was in fact nothing there. James's fuzzy mind tried to tell him that it was just that his mouth had swollen up and was very tender. That was why he was having difficulty speaking. James tried to talk again but all that came out was strangled whisper. At once James's blurry vision made out the two figures rushing at him, Lily and Damien.

James could feel his heart ache as he looked at their tear stained faces. He honestly thought he would never see them again. He remembered seeing the jet of green light rushing at him. He knew that Voldemort was going to kill him and that he would never see his family again or get to bring Harry home. James vaguely remembered being struck by a spell, but it wasn't the killing curse. His body had been violently jerked and he had felt the air rush past him as he went flying in the opposite direction. The last thing James remembered

was the face of Dumbledore looking worriedly at him, before he blacked out.

James realised that Dumbledore had arrived in the nick of time and had saved him. James tried once again to talk.

“L-Li-Lily!” he managed to croak out, very painfully.

Lily gently stroked the side of James’s face as she kissed James’s forehead.

“I’m here, James, I’m here” she said softly.

“Mrs Potter, please I have to finish my examination of Mr Potter” Healer Davis interrupted.

James heard Sirius’s harsh tone.

“What for! James is fine, no thanks to you. You had given up on him! How do you explain this?”

James wasn’t surprised that the Healer had given up on him. He himself had given up the hope of survival as well.

“Mr Black, please restrain yourself. I need to find out what happened. It is just not possible that at one point a wizard’s magical stores are dangerously low and the next moment they have been restored to almost normal levels!”

James tried to sit up so that he could see Sirius. Damien at once pushed his father’s chest lightly to stop him from moving. He wordlessly placed his father’s glasses gently on his nose. James gave Damien a thankful look.

“Well how do you explain it” Remus asked, albeit a little gently but with hidden tones of annoyance. It was obvious that the two men were angry with this Healer for saying that James wasn’t going to survive when James clearly was able to heal and recover.

“I don’t know, like I said to you earlier, Mr Potter’s magical stores were almost depleted. How they came back to normal level, is

How Harry managed to get back to his travel inn, he didn't know, but somehow he managed to get inside his room and lock the door before he collapsed onto the floor. Harry was trembling from head to foot. He could feel the strong grip of fever on him and was trying his best to get into his bed, but he couldn't get to it.

Harry had never really gotten sick before. He remembered getting really ill once in one of his 'Potter' memories. He had been left by himself to recover and had spent the entire three days lying in his tiny cot in his room. He had shivered and trembled the whole time and had not received any medication.

Harry remembered that time well and had vowed to always take care of himself and never fall ill again. He knew no one was going to help him through it and the feeling of being so vulnerable disgusted him.

Harry tried again to get to his bed, but he only got half way across before collapsing again. Harry knew that his magic would take at least ten days to restore itself. The fever had come on because of the spell he had performed. His hand was throbbing and was still bleeding heavily. Harry wouldn't be able to heal very well and potions wouldn't take effect on him until his magic was restored. Harry hoped he would be able to make it until then, before slipping into unconsciousness.

xx

James was stunned by what the Healer had just said. Harry's blood was all over the floor and his bed! What had happened? Where was Harry now? Why would he come here and endanger himself?

"What did you say? That can't be possible!" Lily said to the Healer at once.

"According to the blood found here, it belongs to one Harry James Potter. I understand that he is your eldest son" The Healer asked, knowing fully well who Harry Potter was. Everyone in the wizarding world knew who Harry Potter was.

“Yes, but he couldn’t have come here, we would have seen him, we would have...” suddenly Lily spun around and looked at Sirius. Understanding dawned on both of them.

“That, that man! The one who came in to change the machine! That was him, it had to be!” Lily exclaimed.

“What man, change what machine?” the Healer asked at once.

Lily and Sirius explained how they had been asked to leave the room by a man in the hospital staff uniform. He had been alone with James for at least fifteen minutes.

“Well that solves the mystery then. Your eldest son is responsible for your husband’s recovery, Mrs Potter. Do you remember me telling you about the magic transfer? Well, it seems that your son must have been listening too and decided to go ahead with the transfer. That is why his blood was found here”

Lily was looking shocked.

“But you said that the transfer was really dangerous and the donor would die if he transferred his magic!”

“Indeed I did. However, there is sometimes the unusual case that an extremely powerful individual, or one with an exceptional amount of magical energy, is able to give some of their magic and survive. But it is a very difficult thing to do. Frankly, I’m surprised he could do it all alone, without any help or supervision”

“What...what would happen to him, I mean what kind of condition would Harry be in?” Lily asked, afraid of the answer.

“I’m afraid that he would be in quite a lot of pain, Mrs Potter. I’m sorry but I have to be brutally honest with you. He really should have some sort of medical attention. Until his magic is restored to its normal level, he will need help. You see, once your magic is transferred to another, your body becomes weak. Like I said, a persons magic is linked to their life source, so if that magic is given to another, then the person’s body goes through shock. They can get feverous, nausea, aches and pain, and in some cases they can develop other serious illnesses. In

Chapter Forty Four

Harry woke up some time during the night. He was still lying on the cold floor of his room. Harry opened his eyes and tried to lift his head to see where he was. His vision blurred as he tried to look around him. The raven haired boy carefully picked himself off the floor and moaned at the pain shooting through him. He could hardly open his eyes due to the fever he was suffering from.

Harry finally reached his bed and collapsed on it. He didn't even bother changing his clothes and instead lay on the bed fully clothed. His mouth was dry and his tongue felt as if it were raw. Harry knew that to get water he would have to get back up, as his wandless magic wouldn't help him, until his stores were replenished. However thirsty he was, Harry couldn't manage to get back up, instead he curled onto his bed and fell into another fever induced sleep.

xx

Damien was beside himself with worry. His dad was still in hospital, as Healer Davis wanted to keep him in overnight, just to make sure his wounds properly healed. Healer Davis was forced, by law, to report sighting of Harry at St Mungo's. As predicted, the media was there instantly. They were already present, as the outcome of the attack was being reported. Damien was quickly escorted back home in case he was harassed by the media. He was an easy target, being the Dark Princes brother and all. Lily wasn't letting him out of her sight.

As far as Damien knew, the Weasley family were still at the hospital with Bill. He couldn't ask them for help anyway. He didn't feel it was right to ask for help, when they were in a family crisis of their own.

That only left Hermione. Damien tried phoning her numerous times, but her parents kept on saying that she wasn't back from the hospital yet. Damien didn't know what to do. Harry was probably in a terrible state and needed someone with him, but Damien wasn't allowed to leave home. His friends couldn't go to help either.

Damien excused himself from his mothers company and headed upstairs. He needed to get out, but he didn't how to manage it. Harry still had the invisibility cloak as well, so he couldn't use that.

Damien sat on his bed, trying hard to think of a solution. He took out his mobile phone and sent Harry another text message. He wanted to know if he was alright. Maybe the Healer was making it seem more serious than it really was. Maybe Harry was just feeling a little sick, but was okay. After sending Harry three messages and waiting for more than one hour, Damien started to panic. There was no reply. Harry might be in trouble, he might be really sick. Damien decided to just do what he felt was right. He got up and pulled on his coat. He was about to climb out of his window when he heard the fireplace in his room come alive.

Damien quickly ran to the fireplace. The only people to use the fireplace in his room were his friends. Sure enough there was the head belonging to Ginny Weasley. She looked really exhausted and as if she had cried a lot that day.

"Gin! Are you okay?" Damien asked quickly.

"Not really, how are you?" Ginny asked in a hollow sort of voice.

"Alright, considering everything. How's Bill?" Damien asked, feeling dread.

"Still the same. He's in a coma. The Healer said he should pull through, but..." Ginny seemed to lose her voice.

"Ginny, I'm so sorry. How's Mrs Weasley?" Damien asked feeling grief stricken at the news of Bill.

"She's at the hospital, she and Fleur are both staying with him overnight. The rest of us have come home. Hermione is here as well. Her parents said that you had called"

"Yeah, um, did you hear about what happened at the hospital?" Damien asked her hesitantly.

"You mean about him coming? Yeah we all heard. He saved your dad! That was so brave of him" Ginny said quietly.

"Well, yeah, but he's in trouble. The Healer said that by transferring his magic to dad, Harry's made himself really sick and weak. He needs help. I was just about to sneak out and go to him when you fire called me" Damien said quickly.

"Damien you can't go by yourself. It's not safe. And what if your mum sees your missing?" Ginny said at once.

"It doesn't matter! I can deal with that later. I need to go and help Harry. He's really sick!" Damien said worriedly.

Ginny seemed to be thinking for a minute.

"Hold on" she said and then disappeared for a second.

Damien was left looking at the space her head was a second ago. Suddenly the fire extinguished and there was the sound of air rushing past. Damien moved out of the way, just in time, as Ginny came toppling out of the fireplace.

She stood up and brushed her clothes. Damien was still sitting on the ground gaping at the red haired girl.

"What?" Ginny asked as she helped him up.

"You could have given me a warning that you were coming" Damien said a little annoyed.

"I'm coming with you. Hermione will cover for me at the Burrow. I'll do spell to help cover for you." she hurried over and cast a complicated spell that made a lump appear in the bed. She then covered it with Damien's duvet.

She hurried over to Damien and stuck her wand in his face.

"Say something" she prompted.

"Like what?" Damien asked feeling very silly.

“That’ll do” Ginny replied and aimed her wand at the lump. Damien saw the lump take the form of a body. It was featureless though and looked a little creepy.

Now if your mum comes in and calls out to you, this will answer for you in your voice. Just a few words, like ‘I’m sleepy’ or ‘we’ll talk in the morning’. George taught me that. The spell is very simple though. It can’t answer any complicated or private questions. Just simple things.”

“What if my mum tries to pull me out of bed and sees that I’m not really there?” Damien asked.

“Then you can do the explaining when you return” Ginny said at once.

Both teens climbed out of the window and down the water pipe. They quickly snuck off and called down the Knight Bus. As the two teens were waiting to be dropped off in the muggle town, Damien asked Ginny the question that was on his mind.

“Gin, you didn’t come because of me did you. I mean, I know your family just went through a tragedy. I would have understood if you wanted to stay with your family tonight”

Ginny looked on the verge of tears but she didn’t let a single tear fall.

“If I stayed at the Burrow, I would have just cried myself into sickness. I needed to get away. Bill...Bill wouldn’t want everyone crying over him. He’s going to survive this, I know it. He’s always been brave that way, you know. And anyway, after you told me about Harry, I figured I would be more useful helping him rather than crying in my bed all night!”

Damien put his arm around her and whispered his thanks in her ear. Soon they were making their way into the Travel Inn. They had to sneak in as the management there would probably not allow two children into their Inn so late at night. They hurried to Harry’s room and knocked quietly on his door. There was no answer. Ginny tried knocking again but there still wasn’t any answer.

Damien pulled out his wand, but Ginny stopped him.

“No, Damy! Remember what Harry said! No magic”

“How are we going to get in then?” Damien asked as he put his wand back in his pocket.

Ginny thought hard. Suddenly she started fiddling with hair and pulled out a small bobby pin.

“What are you going to do with that?” Damien asked, looking perplexed.

“I saw a movie in one of my muggle studies class. I saw a burglar break into a house, using one of these. I don’t really know how he did it, but it’s worth a try.” Ginny said uncomfortably.

She kneeled down and started fiddling with the pin in the lock. After what seemed like half an hour, the door clicked open.

“Finally! Merlin, why do muggles have to make life so difficult for themselves? They should come up with something better to open locks!” Damien said as Ginny stood up.

“Yeah, because burglars have to work hard to break into homes. They should definitely make it easier” Ginny said sarcastically.

Both teens hurried inside the room and closed the door as quietly as possible. They turned around and noticed Harry’s trembling form on the bed straight away. Damien and Ginny rushed over to him.

Harry was curled up on the bed and was drenched in sweat. His hair was sticking to his forehead and he looked really pale. Ginny and Damien gently turned him over so he was lying on his back. Damien felt Harry’s forehead, a worried look on his young face.

“He’s burning up, we have to bring his fever down” he said at once.

“Okay, we should get him undressed first. He’ll be roasting in those outside clothes. I’ll try and get some cold water for him.”

Ginny went to the small fridge and freezer in the corner of the room. Aside from bottled water, there wasn’t any food in the fridge

whatsoever. 'Merlin what does he eat?' Ginny thought as she closed the door and opened the small freezer door. She found what she was looking for. Ice, and lots of it.

Ginny looked for a container, something she could put water into. She found a small plastic tub, it looked like it had rice in it at some point. She quickly went into the bathroom and washed it out. She filled it up with cold water and then put the ice into it.

She came back to the bed and saw that Damien had successfully took away Harry's heavy coat and shirt. He was only wearing his trousers now. Ginny quickly tore the corner of the bed sheet. She dipped the cloth into the ice cold water and brought it down onto Harry's burning forehead. Harry moaned in his sleep and Ginny felt her heart skip a beat. He seemed to be in a lot of pain. Ginny wished Harry would get better quickly. It was horrible to see Harry in so much pain.

Damien had torn another part of the bed sheet and took a bottle of water from the fridge. He spilled some water onto the cloth and gently held the soaked cloth over Harry's dried lips. The drops of water fell into Harry's mouth and again Harry seemed to relax. His breathing, which was harsh and ragged, began to even out a little.

Ginny noticed the blood soaked rag over Harry's hand. Damien quickly unwrapped the cloth and saw the cut on Harry's palm. It didn't look very deep, but was still continuing to bleed.

"What do we do now? We haven't got anything to bandage his hand with. I think he needs to get some sort of antiseptic solution on it first" Damien said in a worried whisper.

Ginny bit her lip in anxiousness. She didn't know anything about treating wounds.

"Ron would have known what to do. Even Hermione, she would know the muggle treatment, since magic isn't going help him just yet" Ginny said as she tried to think of what they could do.

“Damien, just try and clean up the wound as much as you can, then tear off some more strips from the bed sheet, we’ve ruined the sheets now anyway, may as well go all the way.”

Damien did as he was told. He ripped up the bed sheets into strips so that he could bandage Harry’s hand. He cleaned the wound as well as he could with water before tying the strip tightly over the wound. He was glad Harry was unconscious, otherwise the pain would have been too much for him.

But the wound seemed to refuse to stop bleeding. After every two hours or so, the bandage would soak through and Damien would clean the wound and try and bandage it again, as tightly as he could. As Damien attended to Harry’s wound, Ginny continued to try and bring down Harry temperature by putting cold rags on his forehead.

Aside from bringing his temperature down and trying to stop the bleeding, the two teens didn’t know what else to do. They tried to wake Harry up, but he was unresponsive. The night went on and the two teens kept on trying to cool Harry’s raging fever.

Damien could see the sweat cling to Harry’s face, yet he was shivering. His skin was pale and clammy and every so often Harry would moan in his fever induced sleep. The night went on, and Ginny continued to soak the rag in the cold water and place it on Harry’s forehead, all the while praying that Harry would recover quickly. Damien was forever changing the bandage on Harry’s hand, getting more and more worried the whole time.

“It should really stop bleeding now! He’s losing so much blood!” Damien said tiredly as he bandaged Harry’s hand again, for what must have been the eighth time that night.

They kept on putting more ice into the plastic tub and all the while kept on checking on Harry’s fever. The early hours of the morning came and still, Harry hadn’t woken up. Damien started panicking.

“Why is he not waking up? Something has gone wrong! Maybe the spell didn’t work properly. We should take Harry to the hospital!”

“Damy, we can’t take Harry to the hospital. You know as well as I do, they don’t treat Death Eaters and to them, Harry is the biggest Death Eater. Harry will be fine. His fever is really high, that’s why he’s not waking up. Just calm down” Ginny tried to calm the distressed teen down.

Soon the sun had come up and Damien knew that he had to go back home soon. His mum would find out about his disappearance otherwise. With the promise that he would return back in the next few hours with proper medical supplies, Damien left. Ginny continued to bring Harry’s fever down. She was exhausted by now. She had been up the night before last night, preparing for her brothers wedding, and then the occurrences of yesterday had drained her. And to top it all off, she had spent the entire night at Harry’s side. Ginny brushed away the sorrowful tears at the thought of her brother. Bill and Fleur were due to fly to their honeymoon today, instead Bill was in hospital, fighting for his life, while her sister-in-law, sat by his side, crying and praying that fate permitted them a life together.

“It’s not fair” she whispered to herself. Bill was a good person, he didn’t deserve any of this.

Ginny’s brown eyes fell on Harry. He looked a little more peaceful than he did all night. Ginny took away the cloth from his forehead and gently brushed the dark locks away from Harry’s face.

‘Look at him. He doesn’t deserve any of this either. He is a good person as well. Look what he did for his father. He has to run from everyone, why? It’s not even his fault! No one is willing to give him a chance. It’s not fair!’ Ginny thought sadly to herself.

Ginny had thought that her feeling for Harry would change with time. She was right. Her feelings had intensified over the last few months. At first Ginny thought she loved him, because he had saved her life. Harry had been her saviour. The boy she had spent so long thinking about. But when the reality came to the surface, she backed away, because she wasn’t willing to fight for him. It was too difficult, so she gave up. Ginny scolded herself for that.

Ginny remembered her first meeting with Harry, in the hallways of Hogwarts. When he had bumped into her he had been relatively nice

to her, before she started saying nasty things to him. Ginny figured that Harry didn't quite forgive her for that.

Ginny smiled at the memory of Harry in his Hogwarts school robes. He did look positively cute, no wonder all the girls were crazy about him. And his constant sulking just made everyone even crazier about him.

Ginny looked down at the raven haired boy lying before her. She realised that the last few months they all had spent with Harry had reinforced her feelings about him. She really did love him. Even though she knew that Harry would never love her back, he had too much going on with his life right now, but still, she couldn't help falling in love with him.

Ginny put the rag back on Harry's forehead and tiredly closed her eyes. She was so tired. She didn't really mean for it to happen but Ginny found herself curling up next to Harry and falling into an exhausted sleep.

xx

Harry woke up and at once moaned softly at as the light hit his eyes. It took him a moment or two to figure out why he was feeling so ill. Then the memory of James and the magic transfer came rushing back at him. Harry brought his injured hand to his face and saw the bandage made out of cloth wrapped around it. It was definitely different from the one he had wrapped around his hand. Harry was about to sit up when he felt the rag on his forehead slip. He pulled it off and looked at it with a puzzled expression. 'What the hell...' he thought as he looked around himself. That was when he caught sight of the red hair lying next to him. If Harry wasn't feeling so weak, he would have probably jumped out of bed in surprise.

Harry looked closely at the person lying next to him, soundly asleep. He carefully brushed aside the hair from the person's face to see who it was, even though he already knew who it could be. Ginny Weasley was sleeping next to him. Harry looked at the sleeping girl and shook his head. 'Damien's got something to do with this. I just know it' he thought to himself. He looked around to see if the Damien was here as well, but there was no one else there.

Harry tried once again to sit up but his body protested. Harry closed his eyes and tried breathing out slowly. Ginny stirred at feeling the bed move. She opened her eyes and at once saw that Harry was awake. She quickly sat up in bed and looked embarrassedly at him. She had fallen asleep next to Harry! Nothing could be more humiliating for her. She quickly climbed off the bed and rushed over to Harry's side.

"Harry! Thank Merlin, you're awake. How are you?" she said quickly, praying that Harry had just woken up and didn't notice that she had slept next to him.

Harry gave the red faced girl a glance before trying to sit up again. At once Ginny extended her hand and helped Harry sit up in bed. Harry looked

a little annoyed at her helping him but he didn't say anything.

"Your fever is still refusing to come down. Damien will be here soon. He just went to get some medical supplies. Ron and Hermione should be here any moment now" Ginny said trying to show to Harry that they all want to help him get better.

Harry however looked angrily at her, making the red haired girl take a step back.

"I don't need any help! I can take care of myself!" Harry spat out. He didn't want anyone to see him when he was in such a weak and vulnerable state.

Ginny looked taken aback. She had just spent the entire night looking after him and that was all he could say to her! Ginny didn't want any acknowledgment. She didn't even want a thank you, but she didn't want to hear Harry say that he didn't need her help. That was just hurtful.

"Oh, sorry Harry, I forgot that you never need anyone's help. You just super human aren't you. You don't get hurt, you don't bleed and you don't get affected like others. Am I right? You were doing fine before me and Damien came last night. You didn't have a raging fever, your hand wasn't bleeding uncontrollably and you weren't

literally on deaths door last night. I guess we just wasted our time.” Ginny said, not being able to hold back the famous Weasley temper.

Harry just ignored her and was still trying to get his thumping headache to go away.

“Why won’t you let anyone help you, Harry? I thought it was apparent by now, that all of us care about you. We genuinely do. Instead of pushing everyone away all the time, maybe you should allow others to get close to you. You’ll realise that it’s not as bad as you think” Ginny said, trying to get her temper back in control.

Harry just gave Ginny a tired look and pushed his covers away. He swung his legs over to the side of the bed and tried to push himself out of bed. At once Ginny held out her hand to help Harry up, but Harry angrily pushed her hand away.

“I’m not an invalid!” he hissed at her.

Ginny took a step back as she looked at Harry’s angry emerald eyes. Harry looked away and pushed himself onto his feet. He painstakingly made his way over to the bathroom and slammed the door closed. He collapsed onto the floor and sat with his eyes closed for a minute. He knew that Ginny was only trying to help, but Harry didn’t want anyone to see him and help him when he was so vulnerable. He wasn’t weak, he could look after himself.

Harry came out from the bathroom feeling sicker than before. His head was spinning and he felt nausea setting in. He noticed at once that he was alone again. Ginny had left while he was in the bathroom. Instead of being happy that Ginny had gone, Harry felt upset. He couldn’t understand why he felt this way. He should be happy that Ginny had left him alone, now maybe he could get some rest. But instead he felt almost sad that he was alone while he was feeling so sick. Harry shook his head to try and clear it. ‘Must be the fever’ he thought. Somehow the fever was making him feel like he needed company with him to make him feel better. Harry knew that in fact he didn’t need anyone when he was feeling poorly. Harry didn’t want anyone feeling sorry for him, that included himself.

Harry made his way back to the bed and climbed back onto it. It was only now that he noticed he was topless. Before Harry could wonder what had happened he drifted off into another fever induced sleep.

Harry woke up as he heard some commotion next to his door. He immediately sat up in his bed, furiously blinking away the sleep from his eyes. He saw the form of Ginny standing at the door, holding a few plastic bags in her hand.

"It's only me" she said quietly.

Harry relaxed and let out a deep breath. He was really jumpy for some reason. Harry watched silently as Ginny locked the door and walked over to his bed. She wasn't looking at him and started fiddling with the bags.

"Where did you go?" Harry said. He didn't mean for his voice to come out in a whisper. His throat was really sore and his voice was breaking.

Ginny looked at him before answering.

"You need food, proper food" she said as she pulled out a small cup which had soup in it. She came over to Harry and handed him the cup.

Harry was about to say he wasn't hungry but the aroma of the soup made Harry change his mind. He could swallow his pride, just this once. He silently took the cup and refused to acknowledge the girl in the room. He silently drank the soup. It tasted like heaven. He wasn't even sure what kind of soup it was, but it was working. His stomach felt soothed by it. Harry put the empty cup next to him.

Harry noticed as he put the cup down that his hand was soaked through with blood again. His hand was still aching and Harry knew that it couldn't really go on like this. It wasn't even a deep cut.

"Ron will be coming around soon. I'm sure he can have a look at that for you" Ginny said, from across the room. She had finished eating a small sandwich. Harry wondered where she had got the money to by

muggle food. Harry shrugged the question away. It wasn't as if he cared anyway.

There was a small knock on the door and Ginny hurried to open the door. Ron, Hermione and Damien came inside the room. The three teens rushed at once towards Harry.

"Harry! Thank Merlin you're awake! You gave us quite a scare last night. How are you now? Better?" Damien said.

Harry was really annoyed with Damien for bringing the other three into this. He didn't want anyone to see him when he was sick, but at hearing the genuine worry and concern in his voice, Harry decided not to say anything to Damien, not yet anyway.

"I'm fine" Harry said. His voice was sounding a lot better now. The soup really did help him.

"Right, lets see this hand of yours" Ron said quietly.

Harry saw the pale face of Ron and realised that he was probably still upset about his brother. Harry wondered if Bill had made it or not. Ginny asked the question Harry was thinking about.

"Any news about Bill, Ron?"

Ron's face paled a little as he answered.

"Still the same. Last night, they, they nearly lost him. Thankfully, Healer Davis managed to pull him back. He's stable now"

Harry didn't really know why the two Weasleys were insisting on spending time with him, when they should really be with their brother and family.

Ron took the blood soaked cloth away from Harry's hand. His hand was showing no signs of healing. Ron opened up the small box Hermione had brought with her. Harry recognised it as a muggle first aid kit. Hermione handed the various items to Ron, while Ron silently cleaned the wound and dressed it in a proper bandage.

Hermione handed Damien the muggle medicines she had brought. They all knew that potions weren't going to help Harry, until his magic was back to normal. She had brought everything from cough syrups to fever reducing tablets. Hermione told Harry how many he had to take in the day, but Harry wasn't listening to her. His mind was beginning to drift away as the fever took hold of him again. Harry closed his eyes and leant back in his pillows. He wanted to sleep again. He vaguely heard Hermione calling his name but Harry fell into unconsciousness before he could respond.

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Hermione joined the rest of her friends in the corner of the room. Harry had just fallen unconscious because of his fever again.

"Guys, we are way above her heads here. We can't help Harry. He needs proper medical care. We shouldn't pretend we can take care of him if we don't even know what we're doing. I don't even know if muggle medicine is going to help Harry or not." Hermione said worriedly.

"What can we do? We can't take him to St Mungo's, I don't know what else we should do" Ginny said, clearly upset, that Ron and Hermione couldn't help Harry.

"Maybe...maybe I should tell my parents. Maybe they're the only ones who can help him. They won't let anyone hurt him" Damien said with resignation. He really didn't want to abuse Harry's trust like that, but he didn't know what else he could do. Harry needed help. He had collapsed due to his fever a few times already. No matter what they did, the fever wasn't breaking.

The other three teens looked at each other. No one knew if Damien should come clean with his parents. They knew that Harry would be beyond furious if they told anyone of his location. Dumbledore would probably find out about Harry and would make sure that Harry didn't leave after he recovered. That wasn't an option for Harry. He would escape and then the four of them would never be able to help Harry ever again.

“No, we shouldn’t say anything to the adults. We can deal with this. We just have to take one problem at a time” Ron said.

Everyone spun around to look at Ron. This was the first time Ron had said anything with so much authority. No one argued with him. It was clear that the attack with Bill had shaken Ron up.

“The biggest problem we have is the fever. We should wait and see what the muggle medicines do for him. Ginny, keep on at it with the cold compress. I’ll keep an eye on his hand. It should be okay now that I’ve dressed it properly” Ron continued.

Ginny at once attended to Harry with the cold rags. Damien took over for a while to let Ginny catch some sleep.

The days went by and by the fourth day, Harry’s fever had come down dramatically. He was still very weak and could hardly stay awake. He didn’t complain though. After his words with Ginny on the first day, Harry kept quiet and let the others attend to him. He knew that he did in fact need help, but he would never admit it out aloud. He was thankful that the other four teens didn’t make a big deal about how sick he was. They didn’t fuss over him more than what was needed. The four of them left Harry alone at nights and spent the days with him.

Harry was woken up by a loud knock on his door. Harry got up and tiredly went to the door. He wondered when the fatigue would wear off. The muggle medicine was working, but very slowly. Harry reached the door and pulled it open without thinking. He had thought that it was the four teens that had come a little early today. But instead of the four teens, the doorway was blocked by three men, dressed in black robes.

Harry hardly got a chance to react as he felt a spell hit him in the chest. Harry was flung violently to the ground by the force of the spell. Harry looked up in time to see the three Death Eaters come into the room and close the door behind them.

“Hello Prince, long time no see” Nott said as he aimed his wand at Harry’s chest.

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Harry looked at the three Death Eaters towering over him in alarm. He knew that he was hardly able to stand, how was he supposed to fight them off. His magic was not going to be strong enough to fight them. His spells would be pathetically weak.

Harry stood up slowly, trying not to wince at the burning welt that was on his chest. The three Death Eaters aimed their wands at Harry. Harry recognised all of them at once.

Nott, Kerr and Reid. Harry stood as tall as he could. He may be physically weak, but that didn't mean he feared them.

"Still got that annoying habit of hexing others when they're off guard, Nott?" Harry said in his strongest voice.

Nott looked at Harry with glee. He could see Harry was sick, his pale complexion and shaking hands said it all.

"What's the matter, Prince? Feeling a little under the weather?" Nott taunted.

Harry clenched his fists in anger as he glared at Nott. This was one Death Eater that Harry hated with all his might. The only reason Harry had let him live was because Voldemort had told Harry he couldn't hurt him.

"So, how did you find me? Took you long enough mind you" Harry said. He had to keep them talking. Harry had to figure a way out of this mess.

"It was really easy, all we had to do was follow that pathetic brother of yours. We watched him for a few days and saw that he came here regularly for the past three days. It really wasn't that hard" Nott said with a smug look.

Harry counted to five in his head. He couldn't get angry with Damien just yet. He had to survive this encounter with these Death Eaters and then he could kill Damien! Harry looked around the three Death Eaters. The only escape route was the door behind the three men.

Harry was fighting just to stay on his feet, he was no way able to fight the three men in order to escape. He looked desperately around for another escape route. Harry's wand was too far away for him to grab it.

"Come now, Harry. You don't think you can fight us when you're like this, do you? Confidence is one thing, but that would be just stupidity" said Kerr with a sick smile.

"Let's go" Reid said and made to grab Harry.

Harry got the chance he was waiting for. As soon as Reid made to grab him, Harry moved out of the way and successfully kicked Reid in the leg. Reid howled in pain and Harry grabbed the wand from him. Reid hit the ground.

At once Harry was facing two Death Eaters. Harry knew that he was useless with a wand just now, but the Death Eaters didn't know that. They could only tell that Harry was physically ill, but they didn't know about the magical transfer. At least Harry hoped they didn't know. But as it was these days, luck had deserted him. Nott laughed again as Harry inched nearer the door.

"Come now, Harry. We all know you wasted your magic on Potter. You can't do a thing to save yourself. Come quietly and we won't hurt you, much" Nott said with a twisted smile.

"Forget it. I'm going nowhere with you" Harry was desperately pulling at the small amount of magic that was in his stores. It had been five days since the transfer, Harry's magic was building, but wasn't enough to be at normal level yet. If Harry gathered up his magic now, he would have one shot at escaping, that would be all, one shot.

Harry took a deep breath. He couldn't do the killing curse. He knew he didn't have enough magic in him. Harry looked at Nott in the eye and shot a curse at the ground.

"MOMENTUM EXPUR" Harry yelled in the strongest voice he could muster.

At once the floor shook and the three Death Eaters got distracted with trying to stay on their feet. That was all the time Harry needed. He had already reached the door, before he did the spell. Harry threw open the door and ran, as fast as his aching body allowed him to.

Harry felt the spells zoom past him as he ran across the hallway and down the stairs. He ran blindly as he raced to the front door. The fact that he was so ill had prevented him from moving to another travel inn. Harry never stayed in the one place for more than three days. Harry ran into the street and looked desperately to his left and right. Where should he go? He had to get away from the muggles, as far away as possible. The Death Eaters would gladly kill as many as possible, it was an excuse any Death Eater would grab at.

Harry ran to the right and ran through the oncoming traffic. He narrowly missed getting hit by a car as he rushed to the other side of the road. Harry never looked back to see if the three men were still following him. He could tell by the sound of thumping feet, that he was being chased. Harry's breath hitched in his chest as he struggled to run faster. He saw a jet of red light hit the window of one of the shops he had just passed. They were still firing at him!

Harry was beginning to slow down. His body couldn't take anymore. Harry pushed the muscles in his legs to keep on working. His chest was hurting and Harry was beginning to feel very faint. He pushed himself further, telling himself that he couldn't collapse now. He couldn't go back to Voldemort. He wouldn't become his mindless puppet again.

Harry saw the opening gates to a park. He quickly ran to it. He knew that this park was really big and had a lot of wooden area. There were plenty of trees. Maybe he could hide there. Harry ran into the park and ran towards the trees. He had to hide.

Only once Harry was sure that he was carefully concealed in the dark hidden area within the trees, did Harry stop running. He held onto one of the trees and tried to catch his breath again. Harry felt his knees give in and he silently collapsed into the ground. He wiped away the sweat that was clinging to his face as he closed his eyes. All Harry could hear was his own thumping heartbeat. The day was still very

early, no one was in the park, as most muggles were either at work or children were at school. Harry knew that no muggles would be around, so the Death Eaters wouldn't be able to take their frustration out on anyone.

Harry never heard the three men coming behind him. His mind was trying to fight the raging fever that was pulling at him again. Harry opened his watery eyes and tried to get back onto his feet. As soon as Harry stood up he felt someone grab him from behind. An arm was thrown around his neck and his hand, which was still clutching onto the Reid's wand, was grabbed as well. Harry reacted on instinct. He threw his elbow into the man's stomach and tried to free himself. Unfortunately Harry's strength failed him as the man ignored Harry's attack and instead kicked him in the back of his knees. Harry fell to the ground at once. He was kicked hard in the ribs and was flung onto his back. Harry saw that it was Reid who had attacked him.

Harry had no strength left inside him. He couldn't move out of the way as Nott and Kerr cast the crucio curse on him. Harry had never been hit with the crucio curse before. Harry struggled not to scream but it was futile. A piercing scream left his mouth as he convulsed on the ground in sheer agony. His wound on his hand and welt on his chest had burst open and started bleeding. At long last the curse was lifted and it left Harry gasping for breath. His head felt like it was about to burst with pain. Harry blinked away the red spots before his eyes. Harry spat out the mouthful of blood and tried to take deep breaths to stop the shaking of his limbs.

"Enough now lets take him back, before we lose him again" Kerr said to Nott.

"Relax, he's not going anywhere. Look at him. The pathetic boy can't even stand, let alone escape" Nott said as he took a step closer to Harry's fallen form.

"I've waited long for my chance at revenge. I'm not going to let it slip from my fingers" he said in a threatening voice.

He pointed his wand at Harry and at once Harry felt something slithering around his neck. Harry gasped as he tried bringing up his hands to free himself. At that very moment, Harry felt his hands being

forced behind his back and he felt the magical binds cuffing him. Harry looked at Nott through his emerald eyes, in disbelief.

Nott gave Harry a sadistic smile as he flicked his wand upwards. At once Harry was jerked into the air with the rope that was around his neck. Harry felt his feet leave the ground. Harry began thrashing as his air supply was cut off. He tried wrenching his hands out of the cuffs but they were tied too tightly. Harry couldn't believe what Nott was doing to him. Harry understood why Nott was doing this. Once Harry was handed over to Voldemort and his memory was modified, no one would be allowed to harm him. This way, Nott was taking his revenge before handing him over to their master.

Harry thrashed as he tried, futilely to free himself. He couldn't breathe. His air supply was completely cut off. Harry's vision began to grey around the edges and he knew he was going to collapse soon. All Harry could hear was the fading sound of the three Death Eaters laughing at him.

Suddenly Harry felt himself come crashing to the ground. He fell hard on the ground and gasped for air. Harry greedily gulped down as much air as he could into his aching lungs. Harry's vision was still blurred but he heard the thump of the Death Eaters bodies fall around him. Someone had attacked them. 'Knowing my luck, it's probably the Aurors, since they detected magic in a muggle area' Harry wearily thought to himself.

He felt a pair of hands turn him over onto his back and saw the blurry image of Damien's worried face looking at him. Harry's mind told him to relax, just before he passed out.

Damien was shouting out Harry's name, but the raven haired boy had fainted. Ginny was untying his hands and Damien quickly wrenched the horrid rope away from his brother's neck. Damien couldn't believe what those horrible Death Eaters were doing to him.

Ron and Hermione quickly checked Harry over with their wand. Harry was still breathing but he was in a terrible state again. His wounds were bleeding and his fever was rocket high again. His breathing was harsh and laboured.

Chapter Forty Five

The three shocked teens just stared at Ron trying to understand what he had just said.

“Um...sorry, but...what the hell are you talking about!” Damien erupted.

“The Burrow, it’s the safest place. Harry will stay there until he’s recovered. It’ll be no longer than about two weeks. We can easily manage that” Ron said calmly.

“Okay and where exactly were you planning on keeping him? In the non-existent invisible room!” Ginny asked sarcastically.

“No, it’s better than that” Ron said as he glared at Ginny.

“Ronald, please explain quickly, we really need to get Harry out of here before they wake up” Hermione said, pointing at the three unconscious Death Eaters.

“Right, come with me and I’ll explain once we’re there” Ron said.

He quickly picked up Harry and prepared to apparate. He hadn’t passed his test yet, but he had apparated many times already. Damien held onto Ron so the three of them apparated together, while Hermione and Ginny apparated together. The five of them appeared outside the Burrow.

Instead of running into the house, Ron took Harry’s unconscious body over to the small garage they had.

“Ronald! What are you doing?” Ginny hissed at him but Ron ignored her.

The three teens followed Ron up a set of stairs and they found themselves in a small room that was built on top of the garage. Hermione was looking dumbfounded as they walked into a very small and dusty room, with two beds as the only furniture.

Ron placed Harry onto the bed and then turned to look at the three teens.

“Okay, explain” Hermione commanded to Ron.

“Well, like you all said, Harry’s options are limited now. He can’t live in the muggle world anymore, not until he fully recovers anyway, and the wizarding world is still very dangerous for him. The only option Harry has is to either stay here or Godric’s Hollow. If he...” Ron was cut off by an angry Hermione.

“Here! You actually think that Harry should stay here! Harry’s very ill. He needs a proper place not a run down, freezing shed in your back yard!” Hermione yelled.

Ron looked a little taken aback. He waited until Hermione had finished yelling at him before attempting to speak again.

“Let me finish! I’m not saying that this is the best place for Harry to be in, but we have no other option. There aren’t enough rooms inside the house, and we won’t be able to keep him hidden inside. This shed was used by Fred and George for their ‘experimentation stage’ for their joke products. After they burned a good part of their bedroom, dad told them they could only do their product testing in this room. They spent a lot of time in here. No one comes here anymore. It’s never checked on. And as far as the place being cold and dusty, a few cleaning charms and heating later, the place will be very cosy” Ron finished.

“Ron, don’t you think it’s still very risky, what if Fred and George come back in here, or someone else just happens to come here?” Damien asked clearly unhappy about Harry’s living condition.

“No one will come in here. Mum and Fleur are literally staying with Bill at the hospital. Even when Bill comes home, the two of them will be busy looking after him. Dad is always at work, Charlie has already left to go back to his work with the Dragons. You all know Percy, busy with work as usual. As for Fred and George, they got that deal finalised with the joke shop. They even got a small apartment over the shop so they’ll be moving out. They were keeping the news for after the wedding, you know, didn’t want to steal Fleur’s thunder.

They told mum yesterday, since they have to take over the shop tomorrow. That leaves only us. Plus we can do other spells on the doors, so that no one but us can come in here” Ron finished.

“It just seems really cruel to keep Harry in here” Ginny said as she looked around herself, at the cold and creepy room.

“No, Ginny. It would be cruel to leave him in the hands of the adults. Mr and Mrs Potter won’t be able to hide him from Dumbledore. Like Harry feared, Dumbledore would most likely keep him a prisoner in his own home. He won’t let Harry leave. Then don’t forget Moody and the rest of the Order. Many just want to hand Harry over to the Ministry. This is the best and safest thing we can do for Harry. Trust me” Ron said soothingly.

Ginny nodded her head and looked at Damien. The thirteen year old was feeling very uneasy. This was so not good. What would Harry’s reaction be when he woke up. What would he say when he was told that he was going to be living in the Weasley’s back yard. ‘Definitely not a good thing’ Damien thought to himself as he heard Ron shout out orders to everyone to start helping Harry recover.

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Nott, Reid and Kerr all stood quietly in front of Lord Voldemort. No matter how much they tried to stop the trembling, they couldn’t help it. The fear emitting from them was affecting the rest of the Death Eaters standing around them. Everyone was watching the Dark Lord, with fear. The three Death Eaters had just explained how they managed to lose Harry again. The idiots even told the Dark Lord how Harry was saved by a group of teenagers.

‘Idiots’ Malfoy thought to himself. If that was him, he would never have told the Dark Lord that much detail.

Lord Voldemort listened to the three bumbling idiots. He aimed his wand at Kerr and shot a jet of green light at him. Kerr had been the quiet one. He had stood, shaking with fear the whole time. Kerr’s lifeless body fell to the ground and the other two Death Eaters immediately fell to their knees and started begging the Dark Lord not to kill them as well.

Lord Voldemort looked at them through his red pitiless eyes. He forced Nott to stand and asked him a question in an icy voice.

“Have you told me everything, Nott?”

“Y-y-yes my Lord, e-everything!” Nott stuttered back.

“Well, how can it be that you were ambushed by a group of mere children?” Lord Voldemort asked in his dangerous voice.

Nott gulped as he looked into those ruby red eyes, glistening with anger. He had obviously left out the parts about torturing Harry. The truth was that Nott was so engrossed with Harry’s suffering that he and the other two Death Eaters hadn’t noticed the four teens creeping up behind them. Nott was breaking into a sweat. What would Lord Voldemort do to him if he found out that he had wasted time hurting Harry, when he could have apparated back to the Riddle Manor? Nott gave an involuntary shudder at the thought.

Lord Voldemort could tell that Nott was holding back information. Nott wasn’t an inner circle Death Eater for no reason. He was an efficient Death Eater with a lot of skill and stealth. So for him to get caught off guard and by children nonetheless was suspicious. Lord Voldemort knew that there was only one other time Nott had been attacked by a child, but that was by Harry and that made things very different. Harry was powerful, even at the age of seven. This matter had more to it.

Lord Voldemort burned his red eyes into Nott and without giving the shaking man a chance to collect himself, Lord Voldemort entered his mind and memories. It wasn’t very hard to find the memory, as Nott was trying desperately to hide it. Lord Voldemort felt his heart leap as he saw Nott attacking a very sick and worn out looking Harry. It hit Voldemort that Harry was sick. Why was Harry sick? He never got ill! Harry had too much power within him to fall ill. Then Voldemort realised that Harry was suffering because of the magical transfer he had did to save that pathetic James Potter! Voldemort grasped at the last strand of his patience to keep control of his anger.

However, that patience was gone, when he saw Reid attack Harry from behind and throw him viciously to the ground before kicking him. Nott said something about taking revenge before conjuring a rope

that slid around the fallen boy's neck. Lord Voldemort didn't want to watch anymore, he had a fairly good idea of what was about to happen next, but he also wanted to know how the four children attacked three of his Death Eaters.

Lord Voldemort felt his insides twist with fury as he saw Harry being hoisted into the air by that horrid rope. Harry thrashed and tried to free himself but his attempts were futile. Lord Voldemort heard his Death Eaters manic laughing ring in his ears as Harry's eyes rolled to the back of his head, just seconds before he came tumbling to the ground.

Nott swung around to see who had cancelled out his levitation charm and saw the four teens standing before him, wands raised and pointing straight at them. A red haired boy threw a 'Stupefy' spell at a shocked looking Kerr, who instantly hit the ground, while at the same time a bushy brown haired girl knocked out Reid with a levitated branch. Both Death Eaters hit the ground instantly. Nott threw a curse at the black haired boy standing in the middle of the group. The spell stopped just before hitting the boy and seemingly disappeared into thin air. The black haired boy didn't even flinch when Nott's spell had come zooming at him. He threw a 'Stupefy' at Nott which succeeded in knocking him out.

Lord Voldemort pulled himself out of the memory and towered over the petrified form of Nott. Because of this Death Eaters stupidity, Harry was not captured and brought back to hi. Nott had dared to hurt Harry, when Voldemort had given specific orders to only capture Harry and not to hurt him.

Lord Voldemort threw Nott away from himself, and the man was sprawled on the ground within seconds. Nott turned his fearful eyes onto his master and started to cry pathetically. Lord Voldemort pointed his wand at Nott and at once Nott cried out and started begging for his life.

"No! No! My Lord, please, don't kill me! Please, forgive me, I will never do anything to upset you ever again. I swear! Please, my Lord please, have mercy"

Lord Voldemort replied in his cold voice.

“You should have thought about my wrath, before raising your wand at Harry. You above everyone else, should have known that I don't tolerate anyone hurting him”

The jet of green light thundered out of Voldemort's wand and hit Nott in the chest. Nott's eyes darkened as the light left them forever. Everyone's eyes were fixed on the limp body of Nott.

Lord Voldemort turned to look at the third Death Eater. Reid immediately fell to his knees and began apologising profusely. His words were hardly understandable as huge sobs left the trembling figure.

Lord Voldemort didn't seem to even hear him. He pushed the man onto the ground with a flick of his wand before killing him as well. The three Death Eater bodies were picked up and disposed of quickly.

Lord Voldemort didn't want to speak to anyone, he passed Bella, without even looking up at her. His mind was clouded with worry, not for Harry, but bizarrely enough, for the 'other Potter boy'. Lord Voldemort sat in his private quarters and thought about the spell that had seemingly disappeared before hitting the boy. The boy looked younger than the rest of the group. He didn't look exceptionally powerful.' Well he is Harry's blood brother' he thought. Lord Voldemort shook his head, clearing his head. Harry was only powerful because of him. Lord Voldemort made him powerful, by making him the descendant of Slytherin. Harry had two ancestral bloodlines connected to him. That was the reason he was exceptionally powerful. It had nothing to do with being a Potter alone. No, the boy must have had some other factor, protecting him. But what could it be? And how was it so powerful. The boy seemed to know he couldn't be touched, as he didn't even flinch, or react in the slightest to the attack. Lord Voldemort sighed and rubbed at his temples. He was getting a headache. He promised to himself that he would get to the bottom of this mystery. He knew that it involved Harry, somehow it just did,

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Harry woke up with an aching headache. He blearily opened his eyes and looked around himself. Once again, Harry woke up to find himself

alone. This time though, he didn't recognise his surroundings. Panic set in and he tried to jump out of the bed. His fatigued body protested to being moved so suddenly and Harry ended up sitting up in bed. Harry's emerald eyes swept the surroundings and tried to take in as much information as possible.

He took in the sight of a small room, smaller than his usual rooms in the Travel Inns. There was a worn out looking carpet on the floor and the room was clean enough but smelled, like it wasn't usually occupied. It had a rather mouldy smell to it. Harry fought the feeling of nausea and rubbed at his chest, to pacify the feeling of wanting to be sick.

Harry looked at the bed he was lying in. There was a similar bed situated across from him. Harry wasn't feeling cold but a shiver ran through him nonetheless. Did the Death Eaters bring him here? No they were definitely attacked. Harry remembered feeling the ground shake, when their bodies had hit the ground. He remembered looking at the worried face of Damien just before passing out.

Suddenly the very person opened the door and came inside. Harry looked at the tired and very worried looking form of Damien standing at the door. He saw that Damien's hazel eyes widen with surprise and relief as he rushed to Harry's side.

"You're up! Thank Merlin! I was getting really panicky. It's been five hours!" Damien said as he approached Harry's bed.

He reached out to feel Harry's forehead, to see if his fever was still high or not, but Harry moved away from him. Damien looked shocked by Harry's reaction but before he could ask what was wrong Harry spoke to him.

"Where am I?" Harry asked in a quiet voice, but the hint of suppressed anger was clearly there. Damien decided to ignore Harry's reaction, for now.

"We didn't know where to take you, we couldn't stay in the muggle world, so we brought you here, it's...it's the Burrow. You're at the Wealsey's." Damien said, hoping Harry wouldn't freak out.

Too late, Harry had already climbed out of the bed and was staring at Damien with fury.

"I'm where? You've brought me where?" Harry asked incredulously.

"The...the Burrow" Damien repeated, wishing that someone was with him just now.

Harry felt his legs shake a little as he tried to stand without leaning on the bed. He took a step towards Damien, but stopped as he saw Damien take a step back in fear. Harry closed his eyes and tried to calm his temper.

"Harry, what wrong? Why are you so mad?" Damien asked.

Harry lost the hold on his temper and yelled at the shocked teen.

"What's wrong? You're actually asking what's wrong. Damn it, Damien! You've done everything possible to get me killed! And since that didn't work, you've brought me at the doorstep of Order members! And you're actually questioning my anger!"

Damien stood silently, allowing Harry to yell at him. The room had Silencio cast on it, so no one would hear him anyway. Harry took a breath to calm himself.

"Damien, tell me the truth. Do you want me to get caught?" Harry asked, as calmly as he could.

"No!" Damien replied, shocked that Harry would even say something like that.

"Then, why are you doing this to me?"

"Harry, I...I didn't have a choice. We didn't know what to do, the Death Eaters know about you staying in the muggle world! We didn't..." Damien was cut off by Harry.

"Why don't you venture a guess as to how they found out? Go on, Damien, try and figure this out why don't you!" Harry spat at the teen.

Harry knew that it wasn't Damien's fault, but he was aching all over and his head was throbbing with pain. His throat felt swollen because of that stupid Nott, and to top it all off, Harry was staying in the Wealsey's back yard!

"Why are you blaming me? I didn't tell anyone about you" Damien said in a voice that was nearly breaking with emotion.

"You didn't have to say a word. They followed you! They followed you for *three days* without you knowing about it. It's one thing not to notice your three friends following you one time, but not to notice that three men, dressed in black robes are following you for three days! How do you not notice something that?"

Harry was starting to feel his chest hurt, his vision blurred and Harry instinctively reached out for the bed. He sat down on it and took a deep breath.

"I...I don't know what to say. I'm so sorry. I don't even know how they managed to follow me. I'm so careful, I...I, Harry please, forgive me, I'm really very sorry" Damien said as he knelt down and looked at Harry.

"Sorry doesn't mean anything. Do you what would have happened if I was taken back? I would have my memory wiped clean and I would go back to being a mindless puppet! And the first thing Voldemort would do would be to send me out to kill all of you!" Harry looked at the tear filled hazel eyes and found himself looking away again.

"Forget it, Damien. It's my fault. I actually thought you would be discreet about me but I was asking too much from you. Just leave!"

Damien tried talking to Harry, but Harry refused to respond. Soon the tearful teen gave up and left. Harry would have left as well, if he had managed to stand on his two feet without collapsing.

Damien had rushed back into the Burrow and had told the other three teens what Harry had said.

“That’s so unreasonable of him! It wasn’t your fault. How were you supposed to know if anyone is following you? I’ll go talk to him” Ginny said after hearing Damien’s recount of Harry’s conversation.

“No, Gin. Just leave it. Harry’s right. I messed up. Harry could have been captured and taken back and it’s my entire fault.” Damien said sadly.

“Just do me a favour. Take this back to him” Damien said as he handed her Harry’s wand. Damien had gone back to Harry’s room at the travel inn and had settled his account, and picked up Harry’s belongings.

Ginny took the wand and looked at Damien with sympathy. Hermione came over and gave the younger boy a warm hug.

“He’s just angry right now. Give him time, Damy. He’ll come around. He’ll realise that you didn’t mean for any of this to happen.

Ginny and Hermione went over with some food for Harry. As soon as they stepped into the small room, they saw that the raven haired boy was fast asleep. Ginny set the plate of food next to Harry’s bed and did a spell to keep the food warm. Hermione stood by the door, waiting for Ginny.

Ginny was upset for Damien, but at the same time she found that she couldn’t really be angry with Harry. He had just been through a terrifying ordeal at the hands of those Death Eaters. Ginny saw the deep bruise across Harry’s neck that the rope had left. She instinctively reached over and gently touched the bruise, anger coursing through her at the memory of Harry being tortured.

“Animals” she whispered to herself angrily.

Ginny and Hermione left and didn’t check up on Harry until the next morning. Although the four teens tried to talk to Harry and apologise profusely, Harry didn’t respond to anyone. He didn’t talk to anyone after his initial talk with Damien.

The days went by and Harry was slowly recovering. He ate whatever food was brought to him and took the various medicines given to him

by Hermione. The only person Harry would give any kind of response to was Ginny. Even then, it was only one worded answers.

Ron was right. No one came to investigate the small room built over the garage. Molly and Fleur were still spending a lot of time with a recovering Bill. Fred and George would come over all the time, but had to rush back to their shop in Diagon Alley. Percy and Arthur were exhausted when they came back from work and so no one really noticed that the four teens were spending time in the Weasley's garage.

After ten days, Harry had recovered fully. His magical stores had replenished themselves and although Harry would never admit it out aloud, the four teens had really taken care of him. His tiny room did have a comfy feel to it, but Harry was still glad to see the end of it.

On his last day, the four teens tried desperately to talk to him again.

"Where are you going to go now? You should really wait a few more days before leaving. You don't seem to be fully healed yet" Hermione said worryingly.

"When will you contact us?" Damien asked timidly.

Harry looked over the teen before picking up his cloak.

"Never" Harry replied simply.

"Come on Harry mate! We all said we were sorry, what more do you want from us?" Ron said, a hint of annoyance in his voice.

"I don't want anything from you. I never have. You all insisted on helping me. I told you all that I could be compromised with all of our constant meetings. Now it happened. I'm not taking another chance like that. It's finished! You guys are no longer helping me" Harry said in a final sort of voice.

The two girls looked speechless. They all knew Harry was angry but they didn't think he would just cut them all off like that. Especially after all of them had risked so much to help him. Not to mention the

last two weeks spent slowly nursing him back to full health. Before anyone could say anything, Ron spoke to Harry.

“So, that’s it then! You say it’s finished and suddenly it’s finished! You think after getting so involved with everything, all of us will just take a back seat just because you say so! You can do whatever you want, Harry. You can say all you like! We started this and we’re not stepping back until the last Horcrux is destroyed!”

His words echoed around the walls of the small room. For a moment no one spoke. Damien was holding his breath, waiting for Harry to react. Harry moved past Ron silently and reached for the door.

“Do whatever you want, just don’t get in my way” Harry said to Ron, before opening the door and walking away from the four teens that had helped him more than anyone else ever had.

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Where Harry went and how he managed to stay hidden from the Death Eaters, no one knew. Ron, Hermione, Ginny and Damien occupied their minds by searching for possible Horcruxes. Damien spent as much time as possible at the Burrow. The more time he spent researching, the less time he had to think about how much he missed speaking to his brother. Damien knew that Harry would make contact with him again. Harry would calm down and would eventually forgive him. Damien hoped.

Bill finally came home after three weeks, and as predicted, the burrow became very busy. Relatives were coming to see Bill and to wish him a speedy recovery. As a result, the four teens moved to Godric’s Hollow.

It was not until the fourth week, since Harry had left the Burrow, that the four teens finally got a clue to the next Horcrux. There was a clipping in the Daily Prophet, advertising the opening of an exhibition in the Gallery of Magical Artefacts and famous Masterpieces.

The object that was probably the most expensive object in the whole Gallery was without a doubt a Horcrux. It was a golden quill, five times the size of a normal quill. It belonged to Rowena Ravenclaw.

The four teens looked at each other in shock. The description of the quill was fitting for a Horcrux. It belonged to one of the founders of Hogwarts, it was very expensive and was without a doubt a magical object with a great deal of magical history. It had just been moved to this Gallery in London after being moved to different locations all around the world.

“Okay, so this is definitely a Horcrux, agreed” Ron asked.

The other three just nodded their heads in agreement.

“But, I don’t understand. Isn’t this dangerous! I mean for V-Voldemort. Anyone could just steal this object. I don’t understand why he wouldn’t protect this” Ginny said, thinking aloud.

“It’s just like the Cup. He on purposely plants his Horcruxes in places that have a lot of protection in place. And if anyone does manage to steal it, they most likely won’t want to destroy it, since it’s such a priceless artefact. This Quill isn’t going to be just sitting there, ready for anyone to pick it up. The Gallery will have its own protection spells, as well as Voldemort placing his own protection spells on it.” Hermione explained.

“So, what are we going to do? Do we tell the Order, or do we attempt this on our own” Damien asked.

The four teens looked at each other and wordlessly agreed that they were going to go for this on their own. If they failed then they could always plant some evidence that this is a possible Horcrux to the Order.

“Right, so we leave tomorrow, agreed” Ron asked.

“Agreed”

A few miles away, in a small room Harry stood holding the clipping from the Daily Prophet. The Golden Quill! Harry knew that this was a Horcrux without a doubt. The Gallery was opening tomorrow.

‘Tomorrow’ thought Harry to himself. He was going to destroy this quill tomorrow.

Chapter Forty Six

The Gallery of Magical Artefacts and famous Masterpieces was crowded with Witches and Wizards of all ages. There were young children eager to try out the magical learning games on the third floor, while the older children were busy observing the various weapons used through many wars. The adults had many items to keep their interest as well and generally the Gallery had everything tailored for just about everyone's interests.

Ron, Hermione, Ginny and Damien walked inside quite happily and spent a few minutes looking at their surroundings in awe. It really was a magnificent building. With its glass domed roof and solid gold pillars. Ron was looking at the jewels that were embedded inside the walls, decorating them like a sparkling border.

They soon focused their attention on the job at hand, the Golden Quill. It wasn't that hard to find really, since it was situated in the middle of the Gallery on the first floor. It was probably the most beautiful object any of the four teens had ever seen before. It was made out of pure gold and it was rumoured that the ink was gold as well. It was encased within a glass jar.

The four teens made a point to note the protection that was put in place around it. There were many guards stationed around the Gallery and the four teens knew that it was going to be impossible to steal anything and make a run for it. They walked around the rest of the Gallery until it was time for the Gallery to close.

The guards did their last minute checking before locking up the Gallery. It was always the same procedure. Personally the guards didn't understand why anyone would even risk stealing anything from the Gallery. It was impossible to escape with all the different protection spells put in place. Finally the last spell was cast and the guards locked up the main gates and left to go home.

Inside the now darkened halls of the Gallery, Hermione and Ginny came out from under the invisibility cloak. Ron and Damien cast the disillusion charm off each other so that they were no longer camouflaged with the black walls. The four teens looked at the dark hall that they were now standing in. Everything had an eerie glow to it.

There were many red and green lights, criss-crossing each other, obviously making sure that no one could walk across the hall or the alarms would go off.

“Right, now what?” Ron whispered to Hermione.

“Now, we get what we came for” Hermione answered simply.

Damien pulled out a shrunken version of his Nimbus broomstick and in moments had restored it to its full size. He mounted the broom and gave the rest a cheeky smile as he zoomed into the air. He raised himself to the very top of the ceiling and very carefully made his way towards the glass roof. The multitude of red and green lights came from a small control box that was situated on a small platform. Damien was careful not to let the passing lights touch him, otherwise the alarms would go off and they would all be in more trouble than they could imagine.

Damien finally hovered next to the control box. He saw that there was a small hole where the wand had to be inserted to switch the box on or off. Damien knew that there was only one wand that would work with the box, so he had to figure out another way to deactivate the sensor lights. Damien took a deep breath and flipped open the black box. He carefully inserted a small plastic tube into the small hole. It started fizzing and in minutes the plastic tube had melted and was now lodged inside the hole. Damien then inserted his wand and turned it to the right, the lights clicked off at once. Damien smiled to himself and closed the box.

The plastic tube was another product the Fred and George had come up with. It was called simply ‘the Key’. It was a revolutionary product that was guaranteed to open any locked door. It melted inside the locks changing the shape, so that any key, or in this case wand, could be used to open the lock. The only drawback was that the melted plastic was so corrosive that it would probably cause the lock to be faulty after the first use. ‘Something we’re still working on’ Fred had told him when Damien had inquired about it. Damien had taken the plastic tube, in case they needed it. Damien quickly removed the residue of the melted plastic from the lock. He didn’t want the twins to get blamed for something they knew nothing about. If the Aurors do

check the control box, for any tampering, they won't find any clue as to what was used to deactivate the sensors.

Damien zoomed down to join the rest. The four teens quickly made their way to get to the Golden Quill. The quicker they got out, the better.

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Harry felt his feet slam into the ground as he landed on top of the roof. He straightened up and listened hard for any sounds that may alert him to the fact that the guards had heard him. There was no sound other than the sound of his own breathing. Harry quickly raced to the door that was at the other end of the roof. The glass dome stuck out in the middle of the roof and Harry had to run around it to get to the other end. He had to jump from his broom to land on the edge of the roof. Harry ran his hand over the door to unlock it and to deactivate the spells that had been cast on it.

Harry heard the click of the door opening and he quickly ran down the stairs. He had visited the Gallery this afternoon, under a disguise and had seen the location of the Quill. All he had to do now was to deactivate the various spells and get to the Quill quickly, before any of the guards came in to do their two hourly check up. There were many, many spells that Harry had to deactivate in order to get down to the first floor.

As soon as Harry came to the first floor he knew that he was not alone. He could hear the four teens whispering and giving each other different instructions. Harry had walked onto the first floor just as Damien had flown back to the ground. Harry tried not to get annoyed at their stupidity. Why could they not leave things as they were? They were adamant about getting involved.

He saw the three teens give Damien a pat on the back and whisper 'well done' to him. Harry rolled his eyes. He had deactivated one set of protection spells, there were still many others. Harry quickly made his way over to the glass jar, holding the Quill.

Harry was careful not to trip any of the other alarms that were disguised inside the walls. The jewels that many visitors admired so

much were actually very sensitive sensors. If anyone touched the walls, when the Gallery was supposed to be shut, then it would send a silent alarm to the Aurors. Harry hoped no one touched the walls, or even leaned against them.

Harry stopped a few feet behind the four teens. They were looking at the glass jar and were trying to figure out the best way to remove it.

"I think Wingardium Leviosa would do the trick" Ron suggested.

"No, it would probably set off the alarm if the jar was removed. I think it would be better to pierce the glass somehow" Hermione offered.

"How could we do that? I think Ron's idea is better" Damien replied.

"Why don't you just smash it. That'll do the trick" said a sarcastic voice.

The four teens spun around as they heard the voice behind them. They hadn't quite expected to see Harry standing there.

"Harry? How did you...what are you doing here?" Ron asked.

Even as the words left his mouth, Ron realised how stupid he sounded.

"Just thought I would come for late evening stroll in the Gallery. What the hell do you think I came for?" Harry snapped at him.

Harry walked over to the group and gave them a stern glare.

"The question should be what the hell are you doing here?" Harry said to Ron.

"It should be pretty obvious, we've worked out that this is a Horcrux. So we've come to destroy it" Ron said in a confident voice.

Harry raised an eyebrow at the red haired boy.

"Really! And how exactly were you going to do that?" Harry said sarcastically.

“Hey, we got this far. We’ll figure out a way to destroy it” Hermione joined in.

Harry rolled his eyes at this and tried to calm his temper.

“Look! You guys have no idea what you’re getting yourself into. The quill isn’t going to be just sitting here, ready for anyone to pick it up! It’s protected in ways that you can’t possibly deal with. So it would be best if you all left now, before you get hurt”

“Is that a threat” Ron asked, not really knowing what he could possibly do if Harry was threatening him.

“Does it sound like one?” Harry snapped at him. Honestly why were they so thick?

“Look, I don’t think its right for you to come and order us out of here. We got this far, I’m sure we can handle the rest as well” Ginny added.

Damien was standing quietly. He didn’t really want to argue with Harry. It had been so long since he had seen his brother.

“Can’t we all just do this together?” Damien said in a small voice. Everyone turned to look at him Harry’s emerald eyes locked with hazel ones and Harry saw the hurt in them.

“I told you before, this isn’t a school project! You can get really hurt. Now get out of my way, before I make you” Harry said, while drawing out his wand.

Harry didn’t really want to raise his wand at the four teens. They really had helped him when he was sick but he also couldn’t risk them setting of any alarms that would risk Harry losing the Horcrux.

As soon as Harry whipped out his wand, Ron reacted in the worst way possible. He brought his wand up to point at Harry while yelling at him.

“That’s just typical of you! If you can’t have it your way, you’ll just curse your way to it. We did all the hard work, and we’ll be the ones to destroy the Horcrux! Voldemorts hurt others as well, not just you!

He's the one responsible for hurting my brother! I have every right to destroy this"

Before any one could stop Ron, the red haired boy spun around and shouted a spell at the glass jar.

"REDUCTO" he yelled and at once the glass jar shattered, leaving the Golden Quill sitting inside the destroyed jar.

"NO!" yelled Harry, but it was too late. Ron had already reached into the destroyed jar and taken out the Golden Quill.

Ron held the Quill in his hand and looked triumphantly at Harry and the others.

"See, Harry! It wasn't all that hard..." Ron didn't get a chance to finish his words as a terrifying sound filled the hall.

Everyone, except Harry, jumped as a screeching sound surrounded them. They looked up and at once saw many figures flying down at them. Ginny screamed as she saw the first one hit the ground. Within a few seconds the entire hall was filled with these strange figures. They were dressed in black combat outfits and had swords in their hands, or what looked like hands at first glance. The four teens saw to their horror that these figures had long gleaming swords attached to their wrists. They had no hands! These figures had every inch of their body covered in black clothes. Even their faces were hid behind black helmets. They looked human but the way they were walking towards the terrified four teens made it clear that they were in fact not human. They had a strange mechanic walk.

The four teens hastily backed away from these figures. Without really meaning to, they hid behind Harry, who was the only one who didn't seem surprised to see these figures.

"What the hell! What are these things" Ron said as he clutched the Quill closer to himself.

"They're called Korakilees. They're here on Voldemort's orders to protect his Horcrux. They're creatures that were created by him" Harry calmly told them.

"Can we fight them?" Hermione asked while eyeing these Korakilees warily.

"We can't. If *you* want to fight them that go ahead" Harry said acidly.

"Harry! You're not going to leave us are you?" Ginny asked as she clung to Damien for support.

"You guys managed this far without me, so why not go all the way. I'll take the Quill once the Korakilees are done with you" Harry added in a harsh tone.

"Stop it, Harry. You're not going to leave us like this, so stop with the threats. You can fight these things can't you?" Damien said at once.

Harry looked at his brother and felt a smile creep onto his face. Harry wasn't planning on leaving them to deal with these Korakilees by themselves. Truth was that even Harry didn't know if he could defeat these Korakilees.

"I can't fight them, Damy. They've been created by Voldemort. They can't be killed since they aren't really alive." Harry said truthfully.

The four teens panicked at this revelation. The Korakilees were making there way towards the five teens, who were now huddled into a tight group. There was at least one hundred Korakilees surrounding them. The Korakilee at the front motioned towards Ron and the Quill. Ron understood that the Quill was the only thing that would make these horrible creatures back off. He didn't want to do this but he didn't think there was any other alternative. He extended his hand out holding the Quill, intending to hand the Quill back to the Korakilee. Before he could hand it back though, Harry grabbed at Ron's hand.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" Harry hissed at him.

"Trying to survive" Ron hissed back.

"They won't spare you, even if they get the Quill back. Plus, there is no way I'm letting that Horcrux go now. The Quill will be taken back to Voldemort and then no one will be able to get to it" Harry responded back.

“Whatever happens, don’t let go of the Quill” Harry instructed to Ron.

The red haired boy put the Quill into his robes pocket and held his wand in his trembling hand. The group was now surrounded by these creatures that were getting closer by the second.

“When I say now, start shooting out ‘reducto’ spells. Try and aim for their helmets. Bring up your shields” Harry whispered to the four teens.

They did as Harry said and took out their wands, although their hands were trembling as they pointed their wands at the hidden figures. Harry aimed his own wand at the Korakilee that was the nearest to him. ‘This has to work’ Harry thought to himself. Hopefully, the Korakilees would slow down enough for them to escape.

“NOW” Harry shouted and at once many jets of red light zoomed out and hit the nearest Korakilees straight in their faces. Hermione screamed as she realised that these creatures didn’t have faces. There was just a huge gaping hole, no eyes, no nose, no mouth, nothing!

“How can they see us?” Hermione yelled as she threw another reducto curse at an oncoming Korakilee.

“They can’t! They can only sense the object they are supposed to protect” Harry yelled in the midst of fighting off three Korakilees.

“Does that mean they can only sense the Quill? They can’t sense us?” Damien asked as he also threw two curses simultaneously at two Korakilees while protecting himself with his shield.

“No! They can sense the surrounding living beings as well” Harry yelled as he kicked one Korakilee in the head, while throwing a curse at another.

No matter how many Korakilees the five teens attacked, more just kept coming. Even the ones that had their helmets smashed would get back up and blindly make their way back towards the teens.

“We need to get out of here! We can’t keep this up” Ginny yelled and at once grabbed Damien and pulled him down to avoid being cut into two by an attacking Korakilee.

As if on cue, the main doors to the hall opened and three guards came inside, obviously coming in to carry out their regular checks on the Gallery. The guards were not expecting anything out of the ordinary to be happening so it was quite a shock to see five young children surrounded by strange looking people dressed in black outfits. Before the three guards could do anything, Harry yelled at the others.

“RUN!”

Harry grabbed Ginny and Damien and brought up his shield. The blue shimmering bubble protected them from the attack by the Korakilees. Their swords slashed and tried to get to the three teens, but Harry’s shield repelled all of the attacks.

“Keep up!” Harry yelled at Ron and Hermione. The two teens ran as close to the shield as possible. Harry’s shield would not be able to cover all five of them, it was barely able to cover Harry, Ginny and Damien.

The three guards had started to fight off some of the Korakilees but were at a loss as to what they could do to bring these strange beings down. Once the five teens had managed to fight their way to the doors, Ron yelled at the guards.

“Leave, you won’t be able to stop them!”

The three guards were only too glad left to agree with Ron and as soon as the five teens were outside, the three guards threw themselves outside and slammed the doors closed. They all stood, panting and gasping for air. The four teens couldn’t believe they had managed to survive something like that, with out getting a scratch on themselves.

“What the hell were those things? They weren’t human! What were you doing inside?” one of the guards asked in between taking in deep breaths.

Suddenly one of the guards saw Harry and the colour from his face drained at once.

“You! You’re him! The-the Dark Prince” he stuttered as he drew out his wand and pointed it at Harry.

At once the four teens blocked Harry from the guard and his wand.

“You misunderstand! Harry’s changed now! He’s not with *him* anymore” Damien tried to explain but the frantic guards were now all pointing their wands at Harry.

“Get out of the way you stupid children! You don’t know what he’s capable of!” one of them shouted as he tried to take aim of Harry.

Harry gently pushed the four teens away and walked boldly over to the guard.

“Exactly what am I capable of?” Harry asked quietly.

The three guards still had their wands pointing at him, but none of them looked like they could actually attack Harry.

“I really wish there was another way, but unfortunately there isn’t” Harry said quietly.

Before anyone could react Harry had lashed out and had slammed his hand into the guard’s face, knocking him to the ground. The other two guards shot out two curses at Harry, but they both missed as Harry moved out of the way. Within a few seconds, Harry had the three guards on the ground. The four teens stood quietly at the side, watching fearfully as Harry brought his wand down on the three trembling figures.

They all had seen Harry kill the Death Eater when Hogwarts Express was attacked. They knew Harry was capable of killing the three Guards now. They all hoped that Harry wouldn’t though. These guards weren’t really a threat to them. Harry seemed to be struggling with the decision of what he should do with the guards as well. They had seen the four teens with him. They would definitely report that to the Aurors.

Harry brought down his wand at the first guard and hissed 'Oblivate'. He did the same to the other two guards. Harry didn't meet anyone's eyes as he turned around and walked away. The three Guards got up from the ground in a dream like state and moved away from the Gallery. It seemed like they were heading for their homes.

"Well, that could have been a lot worse" Ron said as he took out the Quill and looked at it admiringly. They all had caught up with Harry.

"How could that have possibly been worse" Ginny asked with an annoyed expression on her face.

Before anyone could respond, the doors to the Gallery were blasted open at the same time as the stained glass windows were smashed and a cloud of black poured out into the street. The Korakilees weren't quite finished yet.

"You had to ask!" Harry said to Ginny before all of them turned and raced towards the road, as far away as possible from these deadly creatures.

They ran until they found themselves bordering the muggle world. The Gallery was left far behind them but the Korakilees were still following them. It was no use. The Korakilees had soon surrounded the five teens again, they moved so fast! It was like they just apparated all around the five exhausted teens.

"Oh God! What do we do now?" Hermione yelled as she looked around herself and saw that they were completely surrounded.

Harry spotted a muggle car parked near them. Harry knew that it was probably their only chance of survival.

"Quick, get inside the car" Harry yelled as he ran towards it and used his wand to flick open the doors so that the five teens could throw themselves into the car.

Hermione, Ginny and Damien climbed into the back seats and slammed the doors closed as Harry threw himself into the driver seat. He barely registered the fact the Ron was buckling himself into the

passenger seat before Harry jammed his wand into the ignition and heard the car come to life.

Harry threw his foot down onto the accelerator and the car was racing towards the road. Harry saw the Korakilees run to catch up with the car. A few of them managed to grab a hold of the car and were trying to get inside. Damien ducked just in time as the window was smashed next to him. One of the Korakilee had smashed the window and was now trying to get to Damien to shred him into pieces with its sword. Hermione threw a 'Reducto' spell at it and successfully managed to throw him from the side of the car. The window next to Harry smashed and he felt the shards of glass rain down on him. At once Harry threw his elbow out of the window and smashed the Korakilee's helmet. The black figure fell from the car. Harry pushed the car to its limit as he tried to fight off the swarm of Korakilees as they clambered on top of the car.

"Harry! Where did you learn to drive" Ron asked as he held onto his seat for dear life.

"I didn't" Harry responded as he made a sharp turn that sent most of the inhabitants of the car falling to the side.

The Korakilees were still following the car, and no matter how fast Harry was driving, they Korakilees were showing no signs of defeat. Suddenly Harry heard a huge thump as something landed on top of their car.

"DUCK!" Harry yelled and it was just in time as the roof of the car was slashed and a sword appeared that just missed Ron's head. Harry swerved the car violently, trying to get the Korakilee to fall off.

The sword was hastily withdrawn and then re plunged, this time it was nearer the back of the car and the two girls and Damien were squashed onto the floor of the car, in order to save themselves from being stabbed.

"Ron! Take over" Harry yelled as he transformed his wand into a sword and began climbing out of the moving car.

Ron watched as Harry disappeared through the window onto the roof of the car. Ron climbed over into the Driver seat and kept the speed of the car up. He tried really hard not to swerve the car too much, as he didn't want Harry to be thrown off the moving car. At this speed, Ron didn't even want to think about what would happen to him.

After a few minutes, Harry reappeared. He slid into the passenger seat through the window and sat gasping for air. He had a nasty cut on his arm but otherwise he looked relatively unhurt.

"You okay?" Ron asked as he continued to drive.

"Yeah" Harry managed to gasp out.

Ron didn't say anything but let out a gasp as he saw the scene unfold before him. Straight in front of him was a mass of black that blocked the road entirely. The Korakilees were gathering there and had formed a block. There was no way the car was going to be able to get through all of them. There were at least three hundred of them!

"Harry" Ron said fearfully. Hermione, Ginny and Damien were all peering over at the sight in front of them. Nobody said anything, probably because fear had overwhelmed them. The car was going to plunge into the mass of Korakilees and was going to be engulfed by them.

"What do we do" Ron managed to squeak out.

"Keep driving" Harry said in a voice that was not laced with fear, but with determination.

Ron looked over at Harry, but did what he was told.

"The Quill" Harry said and Ron wordlessly handed him the Golden Quill.

Harry took the Quill and concentrated on it. The Quill was the reason these things were following them. If there was no Quill, there would be no reason for them to attack. The Korakilees didn't understand revenge or fear. They were created to protect. That was all. When the

object they were created to protect ceased to exist, then they themselves would cease to exist. Harry hoped so anyway.

Harry blocked everyone out of his mind. He looked at the Golden Quill and concentrated on what the Quill really was. It was Voldemort. It was a part of Voldemort. The same Voldemort who had destroyed Harry's life. The same person, who had lied, cheated and betrayed him. Harry thought of all the hurtful things Voldemort had caused to happen to him. He felt the familiar burn of rage erupt within him. Harry pictured the image of James throwing a giggling baby Harry into the air and then catching him again. He pictured the little kisses he planted onto the baby's nose. That image was replaced by the image of an angry James grabbing a three year old Harry and throwing him onto the ground, before taking off his belt and repeatedly bringing it down onto the small child. Harry could almost feel the welts as they rained down on him. 'All Voldemort, it was all Voldemort' Harry thought to himself.

Harry's eyes turned black and at once the Golden Quill erupted into flames and before the amazed four teens, the Quill burst into a cloud of dust. It was just in time as at that very moment the car plunged into the swarm of Korakilees. The car was hit by the numerous swords but at the very moment that the Horcrux was destroyed, the Korakilees faded into nothing more than black clouds. The car whipped through them and the five teens watched as the Korakilees faded away into nothingness.

Ron let out a huge sigh of relief. He had obeyed Harry without really knowing why. He had trusted him and the end result was that they were saved. Ron had plunged the car into the swarm of Korakilees without really knowing how Harry was going to defeat them. He stole a glance at the exhausted boy sitting next to him. Ron knew that without Harry, they would have stood no chance at surviving from those Korakilees.

'From now on, just let Harry deal with the Horcruxes' Ron thought to himself. Ron was happy just helping Harry get there. As long as Ron got to help, that was all he wanted.

"So, where do we go from here" Ron asked quietly.

Chapter Forty Seven

It was common now for Lord Voldemort to get bad news at every meeting. Every time he stood in front of his Death Eaters they would inform him of more mishaps. The war was getting out of hand now. Everywhere the Death Eaters went to cause riots and chaos, the Aurors were there before them, ready to ambush them. Most of his new recruits were already captured and sent to Azkaban.

Lord Voldemort sat with his eyes closed, trying to get the last meeting out of his head. Two of his no good Death Eaters had come running to tell him that the Gallery of Magical Artefacts and famous Masterpieces had been broken into and the only item that was stolen was the Golden Quill. Needless to say that Lord Voldemort had killed the informing Death Eaters instantly due to rage. He knew that his Korakilees would not have allowed the person responsible for the robbery to get away. If the Quill had not been recovered then that meant only one thing. His Horcrux had been destroyed!

Lord Voldemort knew that the only person who could possibly manage to fight off the Korakilees and destroy his Horcrux was none other than his own Harry. Lord Voldemort hadn't held back his anger this time. He let his rage overwhelm him. Harry had destroyed another of his Horcrux. That was two Horcruxes now. The Slytherin Pendant and Ravenclaw Quill. Was this what Harry was up to all along? He had left home to find the Horcruxes and destroy them! Somehow Lord Voldemort didn't want to believe that. He was so sure that Harry would return home. Once he saw that he didn't belong anywhere else, Harry would have no choice but to come back to Lord Voldemort.

But now, Lord Voldemort was forced to accept that Harry had declared war against him. Lord Voldemort had sent away his Death Eaters, with strict orders to bring Harry in. If they failed, Lord Voldemort promised all of them horrific deaths.

As the Dark Lord sat in his chamber, deep in thoughts about how he was going to deal with Harry's betrayal, a soft knock interrupted him. Looking up, he wandlessly opened his doors and saw a trembling figure cross his threshold and fall at his feet.

"M-my Lord!" came a weak voice.

Lord Voldemort recognised the man. He was a devoted follower of his and was held responsible for many things. Usually it was to keep Lord Voldemort's treasures from being found. Lord Voldemort had acquired quite a number of magical objects, each having their own purpose.

"Rise, Corbett. Why are you here? I did not send for you" Voldemort said wearily. He was in no mood to be disturbed.

"My a-apologises my Lord, but I have come to inform you of a great misfortune"

Lord Voldemort groaned inwardly. What could have gone wrong now? He didn't think he would be able to take any more bad news.

"What misfortune?" he asked, now looking at the trembling figure before him.

"My Lord, j-just before the, the D-Dark P-Prince left, he had come to me. He had instructed the removal of one of your possessions. He had said that it was on your orders. I-I didn't want to give it to him, but you know how, how persuasive he can be"

Lord Voldemort smiled, yes, Harry could be very persuasive. After all he did learn the art of persuasion from none other but Lord Voldemort himself.

"What did he take?" Lord Voldemort asked. He knew that at that time Harry was still loyal to him. Whatever it was he took, can't have been very important.

"My Lord, he, he took the...the Lahyoo Jisteen!"

Lord Voldemort felt like a small explosion had taken place in the pit of his stomach. 'The Lahyoo Jisteen, Harry took the Lahyoo Jisteen!' He stood up at once and was towering over the shaking form of Corbett.

"Why did you not inform me at once?" He hissed at the Death Eater.

Corbett flinched away from the enraged Dark Lord before stuttering out an answer.

“I...I thought that Prince had come to me on your instructions. It was only today, when I learned that Prince destroyed another one of your possessions that I began to wonder if he had lied to me regarding the Lahyoo Jisteen”

Lord Voldemort stood, glaring at the cowering man. This was not good. That Lahyoo Jisteen was an irreplaceable stone. It was going to be used in the final strike against Dumbledore. Lord Voldemort pointed his wand at Corbett, who let out a shriek of terror and began grovelling at his feet.

“Please! Please My Lord, forgive me! I didn’t want to give him the stone, but the Prince wouldn’t take no for an answer. I am sorry! Please forgive me”

Voldemort cast Legimens and saw the memory of Harry ordering the immediate removal of the stone. He did indeed say that it was on Lord Voldemort’s orders that he was here taking the stone. Voldemort pulled out of the memories, feeling angrier than he had in years. It wasn’t only because Harry had stolen one of his possessions, but the fact that he did it while he was still claiming to be loyal to him.

Voldemort ordered Corbett to leave, saying that he would deal with his punishment later. He sat down on his chair and was lost again in thoughts of why Harry had lied and stole from him. Why would Harry do that? The Slytherin Pendant and Ravenclaw Quill were destroyed because of Harry’s anger at being lied too. Voldemort understood that. He was still angry beyond reason with Harry, but at least Harry’s actions made sense. But the stealing of the Lahyoo Jisteen made no sense at all. What would Harry want with that stone?

Lord Voldemort pondered over the memory he had witnessed. Harry seemed a little annoyed. He was a little restless also, almost like he was nervous about stealing the stone. The nervous look in Harry’s eyes, he had seen that before. Suddenly, Voldemort remembered something. It was the day that Voldemort had questioned Harry about saving that ‘Potter boy’ when Hogwarts Express had been attacked. Harry had looked nervous and a little annoyed at being told not to

have any more relations with the boy. Could it be? Did Harry take the stone as a payback for that? No, that wasn't like Harry. Harry used to obey everything Voldemort said, no matter if it was to his liking or not.

Lord Voldemort let out a sigh to relieve the pain in his chest. Harry had lied to him. Harry wasn't as loyal to him as Voldemort had always thought him to be. Harry had stolen that stone for a purpose and it was something that Voldemort wouldn't have agreed about, since Harry went behind his back. What did Harry do with the stone? That was the thought that bothered Voldemort for the rest of the night.

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Sirius rubbed his temples in hopes of relieving himself from the aching headache. He hadn't slept very well and was now paying for it. Dumbledore was in the middle of another Order meeting and everywhere Sirius looked there were tired looking faces. James was sitting next to him and was the only one who seemed to be hanging on Dumbledore's every word. Usually this would be the subject of much ridicule since Sirius would tease James about paying such undivided attention to a Professor, but the situation was far away from being funny. The Ministry were convinced that the Golden Quill and the Hufflepuff Cup were both stolen by Harry. While this was probably accurate, the reason given by the Minister was far from the truth. According to Cornelius Fudge, Harry had stolen two heavily guarded objects on the orders of Voldemort. He didn't believe that Harry had left Voldemort's side and was convinced that Voldemort was trying to get his Horcruxes back under his own safety.

Dumbledore was reporting back that he tried to convince the Minister that this was not the case, but Fudge was not ready to listen to anything Dumbledore had to say about Harry. According to Fudge, Dumbledore had a soft spot for Harry since he was thought to be the chosen one. Fudge of course didn't believe in such rubbish as prophecies and therefore dismissed the whole thing.

"I am afraid that as of now, Harry has another two charges placed against him, theft of two immensely priceless artefacts" Dumbledore told the room at large.

Sirius saw James close his eyes and breathe out slowly. He was trying to control his temper. The feeling of sympathy intensified as Sirius watched his childhood friend fight to control his emotions. It wasn't fair that James went through so much. Not only did he have to deal with the emotional trauma of losing his son again, he had to constantly fret over the fear that Harry was going to get caught and punished by either Voldemort or the Ministry.

Their search for 'Alex' was not going well at all. It seemed that Harry had not used his alias 'Alex' in quite some time. The meeting finished and Sirius quickly got up to go home, he desperately needed to get to his bed and sleep off this headache.

"Sirius! Just a moment, I need to speak with you" Dumbledore's voice rang out, stopping Sirius from leaving. Grudgingly Sirius turned around and went back to his seat.

Once there were only Dumbledore, James, Remus and Sirius at the table, Dumbledore spoke.

"I'm afraid I have some more bad news" he said solemnly.

Sirius felt his heart skip a beat, 'more bad news! How could things get any worse?'

"I went back to see if I could speak to 'John and Fiona' about Alex and if maybe they had seen him lately. But it seems that they are missing"

James's head snapped up at these words.

"Missing? What do you mean they're missing? How can that happen? You said you had someone watching them at all times. How could they slip away like this?" James asked, anger coursing through his words.

Dumbledore bowed his head, in what was unmistakable shame and answered in a sad voice.

"I did have them under heavy watch. How this happened I'm still uncertain. It seems that 'John and Fiona' have moved onto another

place only it's not in Britain. From the information I got, it seems they have moved abroad. They got a contract they couldn't refuse and they moved"

Sirius sat still while this news sunk in. They lost them. They had the perfect thing to help Harry, to maybe reduce his sentence from the Ministry and they lost it. Now it was going to be impossible to find Frank and Alice. It was difficult to find two people without anything to track them in the same Country as you, but to try and find someone in another Country all together! That was impossible. They couldn't track them as muggles or as wizards.

"So what are you trying to say? They're gone! The only thing that could have saved my son's life, the two people who were crucial in saving Harry are gone. I can't believe this!" James thundered.

"James, I will figure out a way to bring them back. There is always a way. I will find it, I promise you" Dumbledore said softly trying to calm down the enraged father.

James let out an angry yell and stood up from the table, overturning it in the process.

"STOP IT! Stop trying to give me fake hope! There is nothing you can do. I should never have listened to you in the first place. What was it you had said, 'Hogwarts is the safest place for Harry. Voldemort would never dare come there' and what happened! You couldn't stop the Death Eaters from taking Harry from the doorstep of Hogwarts! You couldn't stop them. And now you lost Frank and Alice. How are we going to prove that Harry didn't kill them! That Harry actually saved their lives and was still trying to keep them safe!"

Silence met the end of these words. James was standing with his fists clenched and was breathing hard, as if he ran a good distance.

"James, I really don't know what I could say that would provide you with comfort..." Dumbledore began but was cut off by James.

"Comfort? You're actually talking about comforting me. How are you supposed to do that? How can anyone comfort the father of a sixteen year old boy who has nothing but death destined for him. My son

probably won't even reach his seventeenth birthday, Dumbledore! Explain how anyone can comfort me about that?"

With that said James thundered out of the room, slamming the door hard on his way out. Remus and Sirius sat quietly not really knowing what to say. Finally Remus broke the awkward silence.

"Dumbledore, don't get upset, James is under a lot of pressure. He didn't really mean what he said"

Dumbledore turned his midnight blue eyes towards the werewolf and gave him a smile.

"Yes he did, but I don't blame him. I indeed wronged both James and Harry. But I plan on making amends. Harry will survive this. Not only will he celebrate his seventeenth birthday but his seventieth birthday as well! And he will celebrate it in his home, surrounded by his family. I promise you that"

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Harry groaned as he heard a shrill voice in his ear. He opened his bloodshot eyes and turned to look at Hermione. The bushy haired, brown eyed girl was looking intently at Harry.

"Well do you?" she asked again.

"Do I what?" Harry asked her groggily.

"Do you agree about the Gryffindor Horcrux?"

At Harry's confused look Hermione continued.

"Were you even listening? Did you fall asleep again? Goodness Harry, do you sleep at all at night?" she asked him.

Harry only glared at her before lowering his head back onto the cool table and hiding his face with his arms. The cold glass was soothing his burning, aching scar. It was like his scar was constantly on fire. Sometimes it would get too much and Harry would actually fall unconscious and would wake up hours later with a pounding

headache. Come to think of it, Harry couldn't remember when his scar was not acting up. It was relatively worse since he destroyed the Quill.

"Harry?"

The raven haired boy pulled himself back up to look at Hermione again.

"What's wrong, Harry? You're not even paying any attention to what we're saying. Are you ill?"

Harry rolled his eyes, finally the foolish girl lands on something.

"You are aren't you? I can tell by your eyes. What is it? Is it your head? Do you have the flu?" Hermione asked concern evident in her voice.

"No, it's not the flu. I'm fine, I've just not been sleeping very well that's all." Harry lied.

He sat up a little straighter and saw the others look at him warily. Ron and Ginny seemed to stare at Harry and were silently agreeing that Harry looked ill, while Damien was making his way over to check Harry's temperature. Harry slapped his hand away when Damien tried to feel his forehead.

"Stop it! I told you, I'm fine. Stop this nonsense and get back to whatever it was you were doing."

Damien ignored him and felt his older brother's forehead. At once Harry hissed in pain as Damien's fingers touched his burning scar.

"Head seems to be fine, except for the scar." Damien said loudly.

"Maybe, maybe you should lie down for a while. Get some sleep." Ginny said quietly. She too noticed how red Harry's eyes were. They were extremely bloodshot.

Harry however ignored them and instead picked up a book and started flicking through the pages. He wasn't reading it. Truth was

The potions seem to do the trick. When Harry took the potion he found that his scar didn't bother him for a few hours. In those few hours Harry managed to do whatever he needed to before the pain would get unbearable again. 'I've got to find a solution to this' Harry thought as he gulped the fifth pain potion that day. He knew that the pain relief potion could become very addictive and the last thing Harry needed was an addiction. He was running out of money and was not feeling well enough to fight and earn more just now.

“Harry, I think I’ve figured it out!” Hermione’s voice brought Harry out of his musings.

Harry walked over to the excited girl. Hermione thrust a large book into his hands.

“Look Harry! The sword! The ruby encrusted Gryffindor sword! It must be a Horcrux. It fits the description perfectly.” Hermione said in an excited voice.

“Well, that could be it, but what about the Sorting Hat! I mean that belonged to Godric Gryffindor as well didn’t it.” Ron said in a thoughtful way.

“Yeah, but I don’t think he would make a Horcrux into something that can talk by itself. That wouldn’t be safe would it? I mean it could tell anyone that it was holding a piece of his soul.” Ginny added.

Harry looked at the black and white moving picture of a gleaming sword. It really was pretty magnificent looking. Hermione was right. It fitted in with all the other Horcruxes. It was very magnificent, it was an object with unmistakable power and magical history and it belonged to one of the founders of Hogwarts.

“Well, any idea where this beauty is kept” Harry asked the four teens.

Hermione shifted her weight uncomfortably and replied without looking at him.

“Um...yes, actually. It’s kept at...um...it’s kept at...at Hogwarts.”

[illegible]

Sirius didn't know why he was always the one who got the short straw. Well in this case he knew why, Remus was recovering from his transformation, James was still pissed with Dumbledore and wouldn't do anything for him and Dumbledore himself was busy with yet another meeting with Fudge.

'Why doesn't he give it up? Fudge would never listen to him now.' Sirius thought gloomily as he walked up the grand staircase.

Sirius didn't want to think about the last time he had come to Hogwarts. That was the day Harry had escaped back to Voldemort. Sirius shook his long dark hair out of his eyes. He was so engrossed with James, Lily and Damien's grief at losing Harry that Sirius never stopped to think about how all of this affected him. Sirius was Harry's Godfather. Before Harry was taken away by Peter, Harry was very responsive to Sirius. He loved playing with his long hair and used to grab at it with both hands and didn't let go until Lily or James came to Sirius's rescue.

Sirius smiled at the memories. He had never thought that the little raven haired boy would grow up to be the second most feared wizard. And yet Sirius knew that Harry had a good heart. Look at what he did for James. He risked his own life while donating his magic to him. And what about Damien! Harry had risked capture when he gave him that protection stone. Because of that stone, Damien was relatively safe from most dangers. Sirius was lost in his own thoughts and soon found himself standing in front of the canvas that was actually concealing the Room of Requirements.

Sirius still didn't believe Dumbledore when he told him this morning that he had figured out what the Gryffindor Horcrux was. It wasn't that Sirius doubted Dumbledore. No, it was just the thought that Voldemort planted a Horcrux right underneath Dumbledore's nose and all these years no one, not even Dumbledore found out about it.

Godric Gryffindor's sword. It was all a bit too much. How can Dumbledore not have sensed that something was not quite right? How did he not sense Voldemort's soul? Sirius gave himself a mental shake. It wasn't fair to expect so much from the old Headmaster. Even a genius like Dumbledore has to know what he was looking for

before finding it. And he only found out about Voldemort's Horcruxes a few months ago.

Sirius concentrated on the sword and walked past the canvas three times, like he was instructed to do. At once a door materialised in front of him. Sirius opened the door and let himself in, thanking Merlin that for once everything was going to plan. However once inside, Sirius realised how wrong he was.

"Hello, Black! Looking for this?"

Harry held up the ruby encrusted sword and looked at the shocked expression Sirius was wearing. Harry had heard Black pacing outside the door and knew that someone was coming inside the room.

Harry had already been told about the room of requirement as Ron's brothers had passed on this knowledge to Ron. Harry was only trying his luck by asking for Gryffindor's sword. According to Hermione, the room of requirement would give Harry anything he asked for as long as it was held inside Hogwarts.

Sirius was staring wide eyed at the raven haired boy before him. Harry looked very different. He had lost weight and looked as if he had not been sleeping very well. His emerald eyes looked dull and his young face was already showing signs of stress.

"Harry!" Sirius whispered as he came inside the room.

"What...what are you doing here? How did you get here?" Sirius asked.

Harry looked at Sirius with a tired look. A small smile played over his lips.

"Couldn't stay away from this place. You know it's true, once you come to Hogwarts you have to keep on coming back." Harry said in a sarcastic voice. He held up the sword so that Sirius could see it.

"Come on, Black! I'm here for exactly the same thing you are here for. Gryffindor's sword!" Harry said.

“Harry, you can’t risk yourself like this. If the Aurors found you they would...” Sirius was cut off by Harry.

“Aurors? I have already been found by an Auror. Last time I checked you were a Ministry official Auror.” Harry said calmly, still not taking his eyes away from the older man’s face.

Sirius looked at his godson and felt his heart break.

“Harry, I am your Godfather before anything else. Please, you have to trust me. Come with me before someone else gets to you.” Sirius hoped that Harry would not fight with him. He looked exhausted, he really did need help.

Harry however, stepped away from him tightened his grip on the sword.

“I can’t.” he answered simply.

“You can, Harry! You don’t have to do this by yourself. You *can’t* do this by yourself. Look at you. You’re exhausted! Please, come with me.” Sirius stepped nearer to Harry and was glad to see that Harry didn’t take a step back this time.

“You can’t help me.” Harry said quietly as he looked at Sirius, meeting his eyes for the first time.

“Maybe I can’t, but James can! Lily can. Please Harry, just come home. I promise the Ministry will never know about you.” Sirius took another step nearer.

“What about Dumbledore?” Harry said suddenly. Sirius felt his heart leap at Harry’s words. Harry was talking like he was considering coming with Sirius.

“He doesn’t have to know if you don’t want him to.” Sirius replied.

Harry was stunned with this answer. He had been expecting Sirius to argue that Dumbledore needed to know about Harry’s return home. For a moment Harry stood still, clutching the sword in one hand and

his wand in the other. Sirius tentatively approached the silent boy. He stood directly in front of him.

"Come on, Harry. It's time to come home." he said quietly.

Harry looked at Sirius and for the first time he truly appreciated what Damien was talking about. Sirius really did have a way of comforting the other person without making it obvious.

"I don't have a home anymore. I lost it fifteen years ago. I'm sorry, but I can't come with you. I need to finish what I set out to do." Harry gripped the sword tightly as he spoke.

Sirius looked desperately at the stubborn boy, why did he have to make life so difficult?

"I know how you feel. I want revenge too, so does James and Lily, even Dumbledore. Come on Harry, we're all on the same side now. We can fight together."

"No" Harry shook his head and took a step back. It seemed as if he was trying to fight the urge to go with Sirius.

"I have to do this myself. I have a different reason to fight than the rest of you. I'm not going to join you. That's not why I'm fighting against him." Harry told him.

Sirius was beginning to lose his patience now, he considered just grabbing Harry and using a portkey to get out from here. But there was only one problem with that plan. He didn't have a portkey with him and Hogwarts still had the anti appartation spells in place. So he tried desperately to come to some sort of agreement with Harry.

"Okay, you don't have to fight along side with us. At least give me some way to contact you. Or just come with me to see James and Lily, just once. They are desperate to see you, to see if you're okay. Especially after the transfer."

Harry snapped his head up to look at Sirius.

"You know about that?" Harry whispered.

“Of course we do! The healer told us that it had to be someone who was related by blood who could do the transfer and then we found your blood all over the place so that pretty much solved the mystery.” Sirius said in a sarcastic voice.

Harry looked a little uncomfortable that everyone knew what he had done for James. It was supposed to be a private thing between him and his father.

“Look, Harry all I’m asking for is a few hours time. Just come with me to see James and Lily. They won’t force you to stay if you don’t want to. Please, just come with me”

It seemed to work. Harry looked at the sword in his hand and then looked up at Sirius. It was clear that Harry was trying to figure Sirius out, he was trying to determine if Sirius was telling the truth or not. Finally Harry gave the smallest of nods. Sirius felt like his heart was going to explode with joy. Harry was coming home. James and Lily would convince Harry to stay, Sirius knew that Harry would give in. He won’t want to leave his parents once he saw them again.

Both of them walked silently out from the room of requirement and made their way out of the castle. They were in the main hall, just approaching the huge doors when disaster struck. Harry was thrown violently back as a jet of blue light came flying at him. Both, Sirius and Harry were too occupied with their own thoughts to be concentrating on what was happening around them. As well as the fact that they thought no one else was in the castle other than them.

Sirius instinctively went towards Harry to help the boy up. Harry had a huge cut in his robes and it was clear that someone had thrown a stinging hex at him. Harry and Sirius both looked up and found at least ten Aurors standing at the main doors. Their wands were drawn and were pointing at Harry. Sirius was outraged. He glared at all of them but before he could do anything a figure stepped out from the rest and started chuckling at them. Sirius’s fury was intensified when he saw who the foolish Auror was. It was Blake and he looked like Christmas had come early.

Harry slowly stood up, careful to keep a hold on the Horcrux as well as his wand, which was carefully concealed in his hand.

“Well, I never thought this would work, but I got to hand it to you Black. Your plan worked perfectly!” Blake said in a loud cheerful voice.

Sirius growled at him before shouting at him.

“What the hell are you talking about?”

Blake’s grin spread over his face as he answered.

“When you told us to stay here and wait for you to retrieve young Mr Potter here, I thought it would never work. But you really are a genius. You got him to come along quietly. Tell me, what is your secret?”

Sirius couldn’t believe his ears. Blake was outright lying! Sirius didn’t even know Blake was here and he would never work alongside him even if his life depended on it. Blake was only trying to make Harry think that Sirius had double crossed him. Everyone knew that Sirius was Harry’s godfather and since Blake was intent on making Sirius and James’s life hell, this was his way to disrupt Harry and Sirius’s relationship.

Sirius spun around to see Harry looking at him with disbelief and shock. Sirius felt his mouth go dry as he looked at the hurt in Harry’s emerald eyes.

“Harry! No, I didn’t...he’s lying!”

But that was as far as he got as Harry took a step back, away from him and the look in his burning eyes was making Sirius break into a sweat. It was clear that Harry had lost any trust that he may have had for Sirius. He shook his head at Sirius and the way he was looking at him with hurt made Sirius want to rip out Blake’s throat.

“Come along now, Mr Potter. There isn’t really any more options left.” Blake said as he laughed at him.

Sirius saw Harry’s hand disappear into his robes, but before he could shout out or do anything to stop him, Harry had already acted.

“I told you before, if you can’t stand the heat, you should just get out.”

Chapter Forty Eight

"I don't care! He deserved that! What the hell was he thinking? I'm going to kill him"

Sirius made another attempt to get past three of his fellow Aurors so that he could get to Blake.

"Black! Sit down! You have to get a grip on yourself" Kingsley shouted as he forcefully threw Sirius onto a chair.

Sirius sat down grudgingly but kept on glaring at the brown haired Auror who was seated in the corner, getting his injuries looked at by one of the Ministry Healers.

"You'll be fine" the plump nurse said as she finished healing the cut on his forehead. She walked away, grateful to get out of the room. There was so much tension in there.

"Now, explain what actually happened" Kingsley said in his deep booming voice.

"Why don't you ask the idiot in the corner!" spat Sirius. He was furious with Blake. Because of him, Harry had run away again. He was so close to coming home. Every time he thought about how close he had been to bringing Harry back he felt a new surge of rage erupt within him.

"Why the hell where you there in the first place?" Sirius shouted at Blake who was looking quite surprised that Sirius had actually beaten him, given him a black eye, a burst lip and a huge cut on his forehead.

"I was there on the Minister's orders. He asked us to go and accompany you in bringing back that Sword. I don't know why he thought you needed help but apparently that Sword was very expensive and important and it was imperative that it was brought to the Minister at once" Blake shouted back at Sirius.

"Well that worked out great" Sirius said with his teeth clenched.

Blake just threw an angry glare back at him and continued to hold his head as if it were about to fall off his shoulders.

"You had no right to hit me!" he said after a moments pause. He immediately regretted it as Sirius made a bee line for him, successfully throwing off the three Aurors around him. Sirius grabbed Blake around the collars of his robes and shook him violently.

"No right! What right did you have to blatantly lie to Harry? What did you think would happen?"

Blake cowered as he tried to shake off Sirius. Kingsley once again pulled Sirius away from Blake and tried to get both men to calm down.

"You better hide your miserable face, Blake! You don't even want to imagine what James will do to you once he finds out!" Sirius hissed at the shaken Auror before freeing himself from Kingsley and walking out from the room.

He had no sooner walked out the door that he walked straight into someone.

"Watch it will you!" Sirius snarled at the stranger.

"Hey! Watch the temper, Padfoot"

Sirius looked up to see James looking at him with a strange look on his face.

"Why the tantrum?" James asked as Sirius tried to get over the initial shock of seeing James standing before him. Before he could say anything, James continued talking.

"I heard you knocked some sense into Blake!" James said with a grin.

"What did the idiot do this time?"

Sirius was of course planning on telling James everything but he wasn't quite expecting to be landed into telling him everything right now. He looked at James and felt a little apprehensive about telling

him what had happened. James actually looked like he was in a better mood than usual.

“Prongs, maybe we should go into my office. I don’t want to talk like this in the middle of the corridor” Sirius said while trying not to meet James’s eyes.

“Uh, okay. If you want” James said, he knew that something was wrong. For Sirius to actually raise his hand to another Auror, even an Auror like Blake, had to be a big deal.

Once Sirius had James sitting down and was safely inside his office, he told him everything. How close he had come to bringing Harry home, how Harry had looked utterly exhausted and almost a little relieved at being asked to come home. James sat and listened to everything Sirius told him. His hands were balled into tight fists. With his teeth clenched so hard, his jaw started hurting, James listened to how Blake had sabotaged Sirius’s attempt to bring Harry home. As expected, James leapt to his feet and made to go down to Blake’s office, so that he could rip the stupid man to shreds.

But by the time James got to the office he was told that Blake had gone home and was not expected to return back to work for the next couple of days. Fuming with rage, James stormed his way out of the office. He didn’t know how to deal with what had happened. Everything seemed to be going wrong for James. The distressed man left the Ministry and wasn’t seen until late that night. James came back to Godric’s Hollow and for the first time in his life, refused to speak to Lily. He locked himself in his room and didn’t come back out until the next day.

Lily, Sirius and Remus tried to comfort him, but James didn’t listen to any of them. The thing that had broken his heart wasn’t the fact that Harry had not managed to be brought home. It was the fact that his son wanted to come home and wasn’t able to.

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Harry found his time was spent more and more with his four ‘study buddies’. Now that all four Horcruxes had been destroyed, the five teens were back to trying to figure out what the last Horcrux could be.

The sword had been destroyed by Harry as soon as he had come back from Hogwarts. Now he was trying to figure out what the last Horcrux was most likely to be. They knew from Riley's notebook that the black diary was one but the last Horcrux was proving to be very difficult to figure out.

The four Horcruxes belonging to the four founders of Hogwarts was relatively easy to track down, but now, they had no idea where the black diary was possibly being kept. Harry was trying to figure out the identity of the last Horcrux before trying to find the location of the black diary.

"This is hopeless! What are we going to do now? There is no way we can guess what he could have used" Ron said as he slammed his hand onto the table, sending the reference books tumbling to the ground.

"We just have to think of a way around this. There's not much else we can do" Ginny said as she picked up a book, listing all the dangerous forbidden objects which had a huge potential of dark magic.

"I think it's time we went back to the Order. Professor Dumbledore must be trying to figure out the last Horcrux as well. Maybe we might get some where" Hermione said with a discreet look towards Harry.

Harry didn't think the Order was going to be much help. After all they had all the information about the other four Horcruxes and they still weren't able to get to them before Harry did. The thing that was bothering Harry was the fact the Voldemort had probably hidden these two Horcruxes more discreetly, since his other four had been destroyed. Harry knew, from the increased pain in his scar that Voldemort knew that he had destroyed the Horcruxes. It was getting more and more difficult to deal with the pain. The pain potions weren't helping as much as they used to and Harry knew that he couldn't keep on drinking them. But right now, Harry had no other option. He would figure out what to do about his scar after he got rid of all the six Horcruxes.

The meeting ended with the four teens promising to deliver whatever information they could get from the Order. The Crystal was still

hidden in the room, all they had to do was retrieve it at the end of the meeting.

XX

Harry was certain that the Order were not going to be of any help. But with lack of any other option he had agreed to use whatever information they provided. He was currently sitting on his bed, trying to list all the places he thought Voldemort might hide his Horcruxes. He knew that the diary was the same one that used to belong to his grandfather, Marvolo Gaunt.

Some would think that Voldemort had used his grandfather's diary for sentimental reasons but Harry knew better than that. Voldemort wasn't exactly a sentimental type of guy. He had probably used the diary since it was the only item left of his Grandfather, and the Gaunt family was the last of the Slytherin descendants. Voldemort himself was the last direct descendant of Salazar Slytherin. He had marked Harry to carry on the ancestral chain, but Harry wasn't a direct descendant.

Harry touched his scar lightly and traced the lightening shaped scar. It was still smarting from the attack he had suffered just less than two hours ago. He had not had such an attack in a while. He had suffered another nose bleed with this attack. Voldemort must have had some very bad news. 'Probably found out about all four his Horcruxes' Harry thought to himself.

Voldemort had told Harry that the scar was the result of the power influx that Voldemort had *blessed* Harry with, the night he had arrived at the Riddle Manor. Harry realised now that the scar was not a blessing but a horrible curse. It kept Harry bound to Voldemort. It caused him to suffer all the time. Harry gave himself a mental shake. Now was not the time to dwell on all the lies he had been fed. He had to concentrate. He had to get to the last two Horcruxes.

Harry snapped his head up as he heard a knock at his door. He got up and pulled his wand out from his pocket. He walked quietly to the door and got ready to open the door. He was not expecting anyone. The four teens were not supposed to come to see him without Harry calling them first. Harry tightened his grip on his wand as he

remembered how he was attacked by Nott and his friends. He opened the door just a crack and saw the vivid red hair at once. He pulled the door open wide to allow the four teens to come inside.

Harry slammed the door closed and turned to look at the four teens with a scowl on his face.

“What the hell are you a lot playing at? I specifically told you never to come and see me unless I call you! What the hell are you doing?” Harry said with annoyance.

The four teens just looked at each other and that was when Harry noticed the difference. They four of them looked a little pale and anxious about something.

“What is it? What’s wrong?” Harry asked his tone was considerably softer.

Ginny was the first to speak.

“We knew that coming to you like this was not right but we all agreed that you should know what happened. It’s better for you to learn from us rather than the newspaper”

“What are you talking about? What news?” Harry asked. He had a panicky feeling about the way the four teens were looking at him. As if apprehensive that Harry would erupt any time soon.

Ginny looked at Damien and he stepped towards Harry.

“We were just spying on the Order meeting. We managed to slip the extendable ears under the door this time. Moody wasn’t there so there was no danger of anyone catching us. The meeting was unplanned so I don’t think anyone got a chance to place all the charms on the door. We could tell there was a lot of excitement. It turns out the Order have caught someone from Voldemorts’ inner circle”

Damien paused, as if unsure whether he should go on. Harry was feeling the uneasy feeling rise inside him. Who did they Order catch?

“Harry, please don’t freak out...” Damien started to say but Harry cut him off.

“Damy, please...just tell me, who did they catch?” Harry had a dreadful feeling about who it was that had been caught. He hoped that he was wrong.

Damien gave Harry a worried look before saying.

“It’s Bellatrix Lestrange.”

Harry didn’t say anything. He stood motionlessly trying to absorb what Damien had just said. The Order had caught Bella! They had caught her and were most likely going to turn her over to the Dementors. Bella had the same punishment hanging over her head as Harry. She was not going to get a trial. They wouldn’t give someone like Bella a chance to escape form the Kiss. This was probably the reason why Harry had suffered such an attack earlier. Voldemort was obviously furious with the capture of Bella. Not only was she an important inner circle member, but she was the one Death Eater who Harry knew had made a small place in Voldemort’s heart. She was probably the only one person Voldemort truly cared for.

“They caught her just two hours ago. She’s being held at the Ministry” Damien was saying, but Harry was hardly listening to him. He could hardly hear anything over the roaring of blood in his ears.

“How...how did they catch her” Harry asked, not quite knowing why that was important.

“It was Professor Dumbledore. He caught her during a raid that was happening in Kelso Village. There’s more Harry, the reason Professor Dumbledore tracked her down was because...she...she has one of the Horcruxes” Damien said slowly.

Harry looked at him in surprise. He had not been expecting any information about Horcruxes just now.

“I don’t know how, but Professor Dumbledore worked out that Bella has the Horcrux. I still don’t know what the Horcrux was. We had to

leave but he mentioned that the Horcrux is now under the Ministry's care"

Harry's mind was flooded with worried thoughts. Bella had a Horcrux with her. What could it be that would be with Bella at the time of a raid? That didn't make any sense.

Suddenly Harry realised what the Horcrux was. How he himself hadn't worked out that it was a Horcrux was a wonder.

"The ring! The Black family ring! It's the only item of jewellery she ever wore. It belongs to the Black family which were Pure Bloods and most of them were devoted followers of Voldemort" Harry said. He wasn't really telling anyone but making sense of his thoughts aloud.

"That's what it must be! The Black family ring is the Horcrux" Harry said as he looked up at Damien.

"Well the Ministry have it now. They'll probably destroy it soon." Hermione added.

"When are they taking Bella to Azkaban? Did Dumbledore say anything about that?" Harry asked.

Again the four teens looked at each other and no one answered. It was clear that this was the information they didn't want to tell Harry.

"What?" Harry asked annoyed at the way they all were acting.

"Well, see, that's the thing. They're not taking her to Azkaban. They don't want to risk her escaping. They're...they're going to bring the Dementors to her at the Ministry. They're ordering the Kiss tonight" Ron said while careful not to look Harry in the eye.

Harry felt like the air had been punched out of him. Tonight! Bella was going to be getting the Kiss tonight. Harry didn't know what to do. His head was spinning.

Harry knew that Bella was just as responsible as Voldemort for lying and betraying him, but that still didn't stop him from caring about her. Harry knew that Bella would hand him over to Voldemort the first

chance she got and would probably cast the memory charm spell on him so that he would go back to being used and manipulated. Despite that, Harry found that he couldn't stand back and let her become completely destroyed.

Without saying another word Harry turned and walked towards the door. At once the four teens were rushing towards him.

"Harry! Where are you going?" Damien yelled as he tried to grab onto Harry's arm, but Harry just shrugged him away and headed towards the door.

"Harry! Where are you going?" Damien repeated as he caught Harry arm and pulled so that Harry was facing him.

"Let go Damien" Harry said calmly but Damien was already holding onto him with both hands.

"No Harry! You can't be thinking about going there. She's at the Ministry! You can't do anything to help her" Damien tried explaining to his brother but Harry pulled out of his grasp and looked angrily at him.

"I'm not going to stand back and watch her being destroyed!"

"Harry, please be reasonable. What can you possibly do? You're not going to be able to walk into the Ministry and grab her and come back out. You'll only be endangering yourself!" Ginny said as she too was trying to hold onto Harry's arm and keep him from walking into a suicidal mission.

"Yeah, I mean, it's Bellatrix. She's just as responsible for betraying you as V-Voldemort. You should have no loyalty to her at all" Ron added in. he was still a little uncomfortable about saying Voldemort out loud. Harry turned to look at Ron, a pained expression in his green eyes.

"I don't expect you guys to understand, I don't fully understand it myself. All I know is that I can't let Bella get the Kiss. I won't be able to live with myself if I don't help her, just this once"

At these words the other four calmed down. Hermione looked at Harry and then turned to meet Damien's gaze.

"Alright Harry, if you're determined to do this then go ahead. But you can't possibly go into the Ministry and launch a rescue mission without any planning. You need to think about what you're going to do" Hermione said in a strained voice.

"Mione! We're not helping Harry to help a Death Eater escape! That's a life sentence in Azkaban!" Ron exclaimed.

"We're not going to be helping him. We're only making sure that Harry can get out himself." Hermione explained.

"It's alright, Hermione. I know exactly what I'm going to do" Harry said and turned to look at Damien. The younger boy gulped as he knew exactly what that look meant.

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Bella sat in her cell, shivering in the damp cold. She was chained to the wall and was trying futilely for the last hour to free herself. How she got caught was still troubling her. One minute she was performing the Crucio curse on that stupid Auror and the next she was knocked off her feet and had landed straight in the arms of Dumbledore. He had under the body bind spell before she could even blink!

But that was not what was bothering her, she was more than willing to face the Dementors, all the while proclaiming her loyalty to the Dark Lord. After all it was a risk all Death Eaters took when joining the Dark Lord. No, what was bothering her was how the Ministry had found out about the ring. They knew that it was a Horcrux. But how? That was what was making her break into a cold sweat. She had failed her Master greatly. He had trusted her with something so important and she had failed to keep it safe.

Bella winced in agony as she twisted her hand, bound by chains. That blasted Auror had broken her fingers so that he could take away the ring. Bella had put up a good fight but at the end her broken fingers had let her down and now the ring was gone. Bella was still

trying to calm down her panicked mind and so didn't notice the door to her cell opening and someone entering quietly. She only looked up when a whispered 'Lumos' caught her attention.

She looked up to see a face that she had not expected to see. She scowled at the person and spat their name as if it were a curse.

"Black! What do you want?"

Sirius lowered the lit wand and looked at his cousin. It was heart breaking to see someone you once knew and loved, in pain and restrained like Bella was just now. Sirius sat on the dirty floor so that he was on the same eye level as her. Bella just glared at him.

"Come to gloat? Aren't you going to say 'I told you so'? You're just as pathetic as the rest of them." Bella yelled unable to keep a hold on her emotions.

Sirius didn't say anything and instead pointed his wand at her bound hands.

"What are you doing? Leave me alone, Black!" Bella hissed at him and tried turning away from him but the chains didn't allow her to move around much.

Sirius pointed his wand at Bella's broken hand and whispered a healing charm. At once Bella felt the shooting pains in her fingers and hand ebbing away and a warm glow filled her. She closed her eyes against her will and let out a sigh of relief. That hand was killing her for the last hour. She opened her dark eyes and looked at Sirius. He had helped her. Bella had thought Sirius had come to hurt her, they were on opposite sides of the war and what else could she have expected from him.

"Bell" Sirius whispered.

Bella flinched away from him. No one called her that anymore. She was either Bellatrix or Bella. Bell was her pet name that only Sirius used to call her when they were very young.

“ Bell, look at me. Please, look at me” Sirius’s whispered words caught her and she looked into those blue eyes belonging to her cousin.

“I never wanted this to happen, Bell. You know that. I asked you so many times to leave him, to come back to me. But you had your mind set on following him. It’s not too late Bella. Leave him. Plead forgiveness and offer information about him to the Ministry. They’ve promised me that they would show you mercy, you’ll be excused from the Kiss! Please Bell, consider this as your last chance to escape!”

Sirius was begging her to take the chance the Ministry had given her. It was all down to Dumbledore and Sirius harassing the Minister to give Bella a chance. But even before the last words had left his mouth, Sirius knew Bella would not take that option. She shook her head, a manic smile on her lips.

“I will never leave him! He is and always will be my Master. I pity you, Sirius. You never understood him. You were too caught up with those Potters! They filled your head with nonsense about Mud Bloods and Muggles. You were from such a noble house! The house of Black! And what did you do? You threw it all away so that you could help those who are too weak and pathetic to help themselves. I don’t need anyone’s help, Black! I will happily go down for my Master as that will show my true loyalty to him, forever.”

Sirius could do nothing but stare at his deranged cousin. She had gone too far to be brought back, and Sirius could do nothing to help her. He stood up slowly. Sirius knew that Bella could not be helped as it was clear that she didn’t want any help, but he still couldn’t help but feel like he was abandoning her at a time that she needed help.

Fighting the tears, Sirius stood up and gave a last look at his cousin. He walked away from her and left the cell, wanting to run away and not be here when those Dementors came to take her soul.

Bella was also fighting the urge to cry. Not because she wanted Sirius to help her, no, she was adamant about staying loyal to Voldemort. She was getting upset because in reality she didn’t want to die. She had no doubt that her death was close, Voldemort wouldn’t help her, not when she was in the heart of the Ministry. Bella

wouldn't want her Master to risk himself like that but at the same time she wished that somehow she was saved from the Kiss. Having your soul sucked out of you wasn't exactly something you could take on lightly.

She heard the footsteps approach the door and the cell door opened a second time. This time it was someone Bella had been expecting, but not happy to see at all.

"Time to go, Bellatrix" Fudge said as he stood pointing a wand at her.

The chains dropped away from her instantly and Bella slowly rose to her feet. She didn't think her feet would be able to take her weight as they felt shaky and weak but Bella stood up nonetheless and made her way to the door. She was surprised to see the Minister alone, without any Aurors accompanying him. She was also a little surprised that the Dementors were nowhere to be seen. What was going on?

"Don't try anything or you'll regret it!" Minister Fudge said as he clasped a handcuff around her wrist and held onto the other. He dragged a confused Bella away from the cells and headed further down the stairs.

Bella was too confused to say anything and so just followed quietly. She was trying to make herself strong enough to face the Dementors and so was lost in her own thoughts. It was only the sound of hurried footsteps above them and the sound of raised voices that alerted her to the fact that something was not right.

"She's gone!" a muffled voice was heard from above them. Fudge stopped in his tracks and was listening hard to the voices above him.

"What do you mean she's gone? Who let her come out of the cell?" barked another voice, this one sounded very familiar, Bella thought to herself.

"Well...um...you did, Minister" the first voice answered back hesitantly.

Bella swung around to look at the Fudge who was standing next to her. He was still focusing on the voices above them.

“What are you talking about? I’ve not seen her since she was brought in here!” the Minister’s voice boomed.

“But...but sir, I saw you myself. You came a few minutes ago and took her away with you” the first voice squeaked back.

The Minister that was with Bella quickly turned to Bella.

“We have to move, come on!”

They both started running down the corridor and made a mad dash to the doors on the other end of the hall. They halted next to a small narrow door and stood next to the wall, breathing heavily, due to a mixture of nerves and running very fast.

“Who...who are you?” Bella asked but before the fake Minister could answer her, the answer made itself known.

Bella watched as Fudge’s round figure started shrinking and slimming down. The hair was replaced with a mop of untidy black hair and the Minister’s round blue eyes turned to the familiar emerald green eyes.

Bella stood breathlessly watching as the fake Minister pulled off the large robes to show black muggle clothing underneath. The boy standing before her quickly removed the handcuff from her hand and threw it away.

“H-Harry?” Bella asked, not quite daring to believe that it was in fact Harry standing before her. She had not seen him for so many months now.

The raven haired boy looked at her but didn’t say anything.

He grabbed her hand and they both ran through the narrow door and didn’t stop until they came to a point where there were two passageways. Harry waited for a second before pulling Bella towards the passageway leading to the Right. There in front of them was a small lift. It was very old and unsafe looking, but it was the only way out.

Chapter Forty Nine

Harry watched with a sinking heart as Sirius came inside the room and closed the door behind him. His wand was trained on Bella. Harry stepped in front of her so that Sirius's wand was aimed at his chest instead. Something flickered in Sirius's eyes as he watched Harry block Bella.

"You took quite a risk in coming here, Harry" Sirius said, careful to keep his voice low.

Harry in return just looked at Sirius, careful to keep his eye on the wand aiming at him. Bella was standing still, watching the whole scene unfold before her. There was nothing she could do. She didn't have her wand on her and there was nothing around her that she could use as a weapon.

"I didn't think you would come into the heart of the Ministry again, once was dangerous enough" Sirius continued.

His heart was thumping loudly and painfully in his chest. He was faced with a very difficult decision. His personal feelings were clashing with his duty as an Auror. If he honoured his Auror duties, he would be turning over his Godson and his cousin to the Dementors. On the other hand if he let both of them go he would be setting free a Death Eater and losing Harry once again.

"I got away then. Why not now?" Harry answered as he kept his eyes fixed on Sirius. Harry was trying to figure Sirius out. If he was going to arrest them, he would have done it by now. On the other hand, letting both of them go was not something Sirius could do, could he?

"Harry, you realise what you're doing. By helping Bella to escape, you're only making things worse for yourself. The Ministry will never forget this or excuse you for this action"

Harry smiled at the Auror who looked taken aback by Harry's reaction.

"I don't think the Ministry is planning on forgetting or excusing any of the other things I've done. What's one more crime on the list?"

Whatever happens, Black, I'm taking Bella with me tonight. I'm not going to let her get the Kiss"

Sirius looked desperately at the two figures standing before him. Before he could say anything more a shout was heard.

"Black! Black! Any sign of them? What's your position?"

It was coming from a small crystal globe that was attached to Sirius's belt. It was a communication method between the Aurors. Harry looked at Sirius for his reaction. Harry was in the process of summoning his wand to his hand. He was going to get Bella out of here, one way or another.

Still looking at Harry and Bella, Sirius reached over to the Crystal and placed his finger on it.

"Negative, there's no sign of them. They must have left the building. I'm heading to the main reception. Get everyone there"

Harry and Bella both stood, speechless. Sirius had lied to protect them! He was jeopardising himself for Harry and Bella's sake.

Sirius took his finger away from the Crystal and looked through sorrow filled eyes at Harry.

"I told you, I'm your Godfather before anything else. Hopefully, this time you'll believe me" Sirius said as he reached behind him to open the door.

Harry's words caught in his throat. He didn't really know what to say. He had been suspecting that Blake had lied to him about Sirius wanting to arrest him, but since Harry didn't really know much about Sirius, he wasn't sure about what Sirius was capable of doing. However, now Harry knew that Sirius was telling him the truth. He really did care about him.

"Just promise me, Harry. After all this is over, you'll come home. Even if it's only for one night" Sirius said sadly as he looked at his Godson.

Harry's throat felt constricted, so all he could do was nod to show his agreement. With that, Sirius opened the door, gave a last look towards Bella and then left. Harry and Bella stood still, not quite sure of what had just happened. Sirius had come to arrest both of them, but instead he had just helped them. He had focused everyone's attention to the main reception, which was at the front of the building, while both of them were headed towards the rear of the building.

Harry tugged on Bella's hand and she seemed to snap out of her shock. Both of them hurried out of the room, before someone else came. The place was deserted, and it took Harry only a few minutes to burst out of the door. They found themselves inside a long tunnel that was very steep but Harry and Bella began climbing it without a second thought. The Ministry building was underground, so this was why the tunnel seemed to lead upwards.

With their hands and faces streaked with dirt, the two exhausted figures managed to come to a small window. Harry and Bella quickly climbed through it. There was a door on the other end of a large stone room. Harry and Bella ran towards it and pushed it open. At once a breeze of cold air whipped at their faces and ruffled their hair. Harry ran with Bella until the Ministry building was out of sight.

It was not until the Ministry building was completely out of sight, did the two stop to catch their breath. Bella leaned onto the brick wall and took in deep breaths to fill her lungs. She couldn't believe she had escaped from the Ministry! She was so sure that her end was near that she had readied herself to face the Dementors. The relief of not having to deal with them was overwhelming her. She turned her dark eyes to look at the boy standing only a few steps away from her, gasping for breath.

She had always known that Harry cared for her, even though he would never show it. She was like that herself, always refusing to acknowledge how much he meant to her. She had fallen in love with that small child who had come into their lives. She was the only woman Death Eater and was therefore left to look after Harry. She didn't know how and when, but somehow Harry had managed to arouse the maternal feelings inside her. She was as much Harry's mother as Lily was. Lily had only brought him onto this world. It was

Bella who had brought him up, looked after him when he was feeling sick, taught him the ways of the world. Harry was her son and she had never felt this love as strong as she did now, watching the boy straighten up and look around to check that they were alone and safe.

Without saying anything to her, Harry started walking away from Bella.

“Harry!”

He stopped but refused to look at her. Bella walked around him so that they were standing face to face.

“Harry, where are you going?” she asked him.

Again Harry refused to answer her or even look at her. He kept his eyes focused on the ground.

“I knew that you would eventually come around. You’ve spent too much time with us to just leave like that! I told the Dark Lord that you’ll return one day. Come, Harry. Come home” Bella pulled at his hand as she said the last few words. Bella was convinced that Harry had rescued her because he wanted to join Voldemort again. It was Harry’s way to apologise for destroying two Horcruxes.

Harry lifted his gaze to look at Bella. At once Bella realised that she was mistaken. His emerald eyes were burning with the same fire that she had witnessed the last time she had seen him, just before Harry had destroyed the pendant.

“I saved your life, Bella, not because I want to join you again. I saved you because I didn’t want you be destroyed.”

Bella’s anger flared up as she heard those words come out of Harry’s mouth.

“So, you were doing me a favour! Why did you risk yourself to save me? Because you cared about me? If that’s true Harry, then you would not hurt me like this. You would come home, apologise to Lord Voldemort for leaving him and trying to hurt him. He’ll be furious with you, but he’ll forgive you. He misses you terribly, Harry. He’ll put everything behind him. He’ll forget everything you did. You destroyed

two of his Horcruxes, for that you'll be punished. You know that as well. But after all that, everything will go back to normal. You'll be with us once again" Bella was saying this very quickly as if trying to convince herself more than Harry, that everything will indeed go back normal.

"Go back to normal! And what is normal for you, Bella? For me to have my memories wiped clean again? To go back to being used as Voldemort's puppet once more? No, I don't think that I can settle for living a life that is dictated and controlled like that!" Harry spat at Bella, fury taking a hold on him.

Bella was furious with Harry. She stared at him with wide eyes. Not only did Harry dare to speak the Dark Lord's name with such insolence, he was belittling the life that the Dark Lord had given him. To obey Lord Voldemort's orders was a great honour and Harry was insulting that. She wished that she had her wand so that she could force Harry to apologise for his insolence and then she would make Harry return to the Dark Lord.

Both of them stood, glaring at one another. Rage was forcing both of them to do nothing else but stare at each other, unable to speak. Finally Harry tore his gaze away from her.

"I had to get you out of the Ministry. So I did that! Don't expect anything else from me. I'm still going to carry on what I was doing. You're mistaken. I haven't destroyed two Horcruxes. I have destroyed four of them! I'm never going to return to him, Bella. You have to give up any hope of me joining you again"

These words were probably what broke Bella's heart. This whole time she had been convinced that Harry would want to come back to them. The fact that he had destroyed two Horcruxes hadn't quite registered in her mind. Lord Voldemort had said himself that he would deal with Harry for his crimes but after that, Harry would be given a fresh start. But now, Bella could see that Harry would never be able to return to Lord Voldemort. He had destroyed four Horcruxes! Four of them! Lord Voldemort would surely not forgive Harry for that.

Even if she dragged Harry to Riddle Manor, he would rebel against the Dark Lord, so much so that it would probably end his life. Harry was gone, and he was never going to come back.

Bella turned her sorrow filled eyes towards Harry's face. She was surprised at herself that she didn't feel rage at the fact that Harry had destroyed so many of her Master's Horcruxes. Instead she was more afraid of what would happen to Harry. He was not going to be able to survive this. When Lord Voldemort finally caught up with Harry, he would give Harry a horrible death.

"Oh Harry! Why? Why did you have to do that? You just ruined everything. He was going to forgive you! He said he would, but now...now he won't be able to forgive you. Why did you have to destroy him Horcruxes? How could you want to destroy him?" Bella said as tears sprung into her eyes.

"I don't want to destroy him! If I can't stand the thought of you being destroyed, Bella then I can't possibly think about destroying him. I only wanted to take revenge on him. He took away my life, my future. I'm taking away his" Harry answered simply.

Bella looked at him with fear filled eyes. Harry stepped away from her. He wanted to leave now. This was too painful for him to bear anymore.

"Leave, Bella! Go from here and lie low until the Ministry give up looking for you"

Bella looked away from him, she didn't even bother to hide the tears that were falling from her face.

"I'm going back! You've already wiped away four of my Master's Horcruxes! I'm not going to let anymore be destroyed. I am going back for the fifth Horcrux!"

Before Bella could move towards the building, Harry grabbed onto her arm.

“There’s no point. It’s already been destroyed. When I was pretending to be Fudge, I saw the Aurors blasting it. It’s gone! The fifth Horcrux is gone, Bella”

Harry almost felt sorry for Bella as she fell to her knees in horror. She kept on saying that it wasn’t possible. The ring couldn’t be destroyed like this. Harry didn’t want to leave Bella like this, but the sound of the Aurors coming in their direction was forcing Harry to pick Bella up from the ground and shake her so that she would snap out of her shock.

“Leave!” he hissed at her.

Bella gave Harry a last look before disappearing. Harry threw himself behind a truck that was parked on the other end on the deserted street. He watched the Aurors rush past and hid lower as he saw his father and Sirius among the Aurors. They quickly passed the spot Harry was hiding at. Harry turned around and leant against the truck. This was a tiring night for him.

Harry put his hand into his pocket and pulled out the small ring. He held it in his hand for a moment feeling the power radiate from it. He had to lie to Bella. If he hadn’t then Bella would never have left without the ring. Harry was afraid about what would happen to Bella because she lost the ring. Harry was pretty certain that Voldemort would punish Bella but then move on. Bella was too precious to Voldemort for him to do anything worse than the crucio.

Harry held the ring up and looked at it. It was fairly easy to take it when he was pretending to be the Minister. Harry had walked into the Ministry under a disguise, managed to drug the idiot Minister, and take some of his hair for the ready made Poly juice potion that Damien had swiped from their mother’s private stores. After that, he had wandered into the room with the aurors guarding the ring. Apparently, they had not been successful in destroying the ring. Every mundane spell they had tried had failed them. Harry had fought hard against rolling his eyes at the spells that were used. He had taken the ring from them and then helped Bella to escape. The idiot Minister didn’t even realise that he had been secretly drugged. He

thought he had just nodded off after drinking a full goblet of the best Firewhiskey sent to him by a 'devoted admirer'.

Harry focused on the ring and once again, the rage and anger inside him destroyed the ring in a matter of minutes. Harry brushed the dust away from himself. That was the fifth Horcrux gone! Now there was only one Horcrux left! Harry looked around him carefully before moving from his hiding spot. He dissaparated back to the corner of the street where Ron, Hermione, Ginny and Damien were anxiously waiting for him.

"How did it go? Did you get to her okay? Did you get the ring?"

Harry ignored most of the questions and moved further along the darkened alley. Once they were all hidden in the dark Harry told them that everything went well. He assured them that the ring was destroyed and that Bella was safe from the Ministry. Harry left out the part about Sirius and the promise that he had made about going to Godric's Hollow. He didn't think he could trust Damien with that sort of information. He would probably force Harry to come home tonight!

"So, everything went okay then. That's a relief!" Ron said in a much more relaxed tone.

"Yeah" said Harry, anxiously thinking about how Voldemort would treat Bella after her getting caught by the Ministry and losing the Horcrux.

"Let's hope everything works out" he added in a whisper.

xx

Bella stood in the darkened room. Her hands were shaking with fear. Lord Voldemort stood with his back turned to her. She had just finished telling her Master how she was captured, tortured for the ring and then rescued by Harry. She told him everything about the conversation that took place between her and Harry. However Bella couldn't bring herself to tell him about the four horcruxes. She physically couldn't form the words to inform her Master. She stood, rooted in fear. At last Voldemort turned around to face her.

Bella wished she could look away from those angry red eyes. Voldemort had never looked so angry in his life. He walked over to her. The rest of the Death Eaters held their breath as they watched their Dark Lord approach Bella. It was common knowledge that Bella was rarely ever punished by Lord Voldemort. He had what some would call, a soft spot for the lady Death Eater. However, even the newest recruit standing in the sea of Death Eaters could tell that Bella was going to be punished today. Malfoy stood near the front, his face completely emotionless as he watched Lord Voldemort tower above his sister-in-law. Malfoy had worked along Bella for years and couldn't help the panicky feeling that arose within him. He hoped that whatever was going to happen would happen quickly.

"You let him go"

The words were whispered but they managed to echo around the large room. Bella lifted her terrified gaze to look at those burning red eyes.

"M-Master, I had no choice. I had no wand, nothing to use to force him to come with me."

Voldemort continued to look at her.

"You failed me, Bella"

The four words shook Bella's very core. She couldn't hold the gaze and let her eyes fall to the ground. She had never failed her master before. She couldn't even form any words to ask for forgiveness.

"You failed me more greatly than anyone else. You lost two irreplaceable things today. My ring and my son." Voldemort's words were spoken with such disappointment that it made Bella wish the ground would open up and swallow her whole.

"I gave you my ring with the confidence that you would guard it with your life. Instead you saved your own skin and now you dare to stand before me!"

Malfoy shuddered with fear. That sort of anger was never directed at anyone before. He hoped that Bella was strong enough to face whatever nightmare she was going to have to go through.

“You’re right, my Lord. I have failed you! I should have died trying to protect your ring. Please, Master. Punish me for I can’t live with myself knowing how I have let you down”

Bella had some guts to ask for punishment thought the Death Eaters. They would have thrown themselves at the feet of their Master and would have begged for forgiveness, even though most of them knew that they would not get any.

“You will be punished, Bella.” Voldemort said quietly, but instead of raising his wand at her he reached out and softly caressed her cheek. Bella was momentarily taken aback but she quickly leaned into the touch. She was grateful that the Dark Lord had decided to forgive her. Voldemort sneered as he let go of her and looked at her surprised face.

“You should know better than anyone. I never forgive!”

Bella realised that Voldemort had read her mind and stood rigid and waiting for the torture curse to be thrown at her.

“My dear, Bellatrix. I will not crucio you.” Voldemort said, again his voice was much gentler than Bella would have expected.

“I really didn’t want to do this, but you have wronged me greatly. What happened can’t be rectified so your punishment has to be accordingly.”

Bella felt ice cold terror grip at her. What did that mean? What sort of punishment was coming her way?

Voldemort looked at Bella, almost lovingly.

“I will miss you, Bella” he said softly, leaning in so that only she could hear the words being spoken.

Voldemort raised his wand and pointed it at Bella's head. Bella readied herself for the Avada Kedavra. That must be what Voldemort meant by a punishment that can't be rectified. Again Voldemort read her mind and told her that he was in fact not going to cast the killing curse either.

At this point the entire room was holding their breaths. Voldemort's words were causing everyone to be cautious of what was going to happen.

A whispered incantation and the entire room fell still. Bella watched in utter terror as a ghost like figure came out of Voldemort's wand. Instead of being pearly white though, this figure was dressed in black, mouldy looking rags. Its face was completely hidden by a hood and its rotting fingers were stretched towards Bella. The entire room felt the cold seep into their lungs. They had no doubt as to what it was the Voldemort had conjured. It was a Dementor.

"M-My Lord! No!" Bella managed to gasp as she tried to back away from the terrifying figure. Her frozen limbs didn't allow her to move much and she fell to the ground.

Malfoy watched with terror filled eyes. He couldn't help her. He knew that. No one could help her. His mind was still reeling from the fact that Voldemort would give such a punishment to Bella. The woman he had rarely ever cast a crucio on.

"A failed Death Eater is no good to me, Bella. You lost me a part of my soul. You have to pay for that with your own soul" with that said, Voldemort moved away from the Dementor. He walked away, leaving the Dementor towering over Bella.

The entire room saw Bella thrash and scream as she was obviously thrown into her worst memories. The surrounding Death Eaters watched as the sounds of Bella screaming rang through the room. Words like 'No, no please, help, don't, please, no!' bounced off the walls. Malfoy turned his head away from the helpless woman as he saw the hooded figure hold onto her and lower his hood.

Most of the men were watching with disgust. Although most of them found it entertaining to watch someone under the throes of the crucio,

this torture was just plain sickening. Bella's whimpering words were abruptly stopped as the wretched thing lowered its mouth onto Bella. The sound that filled the room was one that shattered the windows. Everyone watched as Bella's body convulsed violently as her soul was ripped from her.

At last the Dementor moved away, leaving a lifeless looking Bella in its wake. The Dementor flew back into Voldemort's wand and disappeared into it. Malfoy looked at the lifeless looking body of Bella lying on the ground.

"Get rid of it!" Voldemort hissed as he left the room.

Malfoy didn't move but watched numbly as the surrounding Death Eaters lifted her body and moved out of the room. He had not expected this to happen. Bella was gone. He moved quickly out of the room, not wanting to be in that place alone.

Over two hundred miles away, Harry sat up in bed gasping at the agonising pain that had erupted in his scar. He had a hand clasped over his head but his mind was not focusing on his scar. Harry had just experienced his very first vision. He had seen everything that happened in the Riddle Manor that night.

"Bella!" he whispered in pain as he struggled to get out of bed.

xx

Harry ran blindly into the street. He had only just managed to pull on his robes and had his wand held tightly in his hand. He didn't know how but somehow his heart was telling him to go to Hogsmeade. He ran all the way to the back of a dark alley so that he could apparate to Hogsmeade. It was now the early morning hours and there were plenty of muggles around but Harry's mind was not really functioning properly. He had just seen Bella get the Kiss from a ghost type Dementor. He had to get to Hogsmeade!

Harry apparated in the middle of the busy Hogsmeade streets and at once his heart leaped with terror. There was a large crowd of people standing in the middle of the road, shouting and pointing at something on the ground.

Harry didn't even think about the danger he was putting himself into by making his presence known to a whole village of wizards, Harry rushed into the large crowd. He tried to get the people to stop cursing the lone figure on the ground but everyone seemed to be in frenzy over the person lying on the ground. They didn't even notice that it was Harry who was standing among them! He had no other choice. He pointed his wand to the ground and bellowed.

"MOMENTUM EXPUR!"

At once the ground shook and the surrounding people screamed as they fell over each other. Harry pointed his wand at the blood covered figure and put a protection bubble around her. The wizards saw that it was the Dark Prince who had cast the spells and turned their wands on him. Harry didn't even think twice about blasting them away from himself.

Harry grabbed at the figure and apparated away from the angry mob of wizards who were trying to get to him. He apparated to a deserted spot. He quickly cast a few charms that would not allow anyone to attack them. He slowly turned to the figure who had not moved throughout all of this.

With a shaky hand Harry helped the person to sit up. He pushed the dark hair which was now matted with blood, away from her face. Harry had been hoping that he had dreamt the whole thing. Bella was fine and Voldemort had not punished her so gravely. However all his hopes were shattered when he saw the lifeless dark eyes look at him. There was nothing left in those eyes. He stared numbly at the face that he had grown up with. Bella had always been there for him. She had brought him up, cared for him, taught him all his spells and been a steady figure in his life.

Harry looked at her, searching for some sign of recognition, something to indicate that the Dementor had failed. A small shred of evidence to show that Bella was still here. Harry held onto her shoulders and forced the woman to look at him. But his attempts were futile as the person in front of him was unaware of anything happening to her.

"Bella" Harry whispered.

Nothing. There was no reaction from her. Harry struggled to say her name again. His voice was breaking and he couldn't hold back the emotions anymore.

"Bella! Bella, no! Please, please don't let this be true! Bella!" Harry screamed but there was no reaction from her at all.

Harry threw his arms around the lifeless shell that was all that was left of his adopted mother. He cried as he kept on repeating her name. He held her tight against himself, getting her blood all over his clothes but he didn't care. His entire life with Bella flashed in his mind. The way she used to force him to eat everything on his plate. The way she used to playfully ridicule him when he couldn't get a particular spell right. The nights she had spent by his side when his scar would play up. The way she used to praise him in front of the other Death Eaters just like a proud mother.

"I'm sorry, Bella. I'm sorry...all my fault...I'm so sorry. I failed you, I failed you" Harry's words were barely audible through his sobs. Harry felt wholly responsible for this. He should have known that Voldemort would do something heartless like this. He should have given Bella the ring maybe that would have spared her soul. Harry's guilt ridden mind was making him feel like he could have done a hundred and one things differently that could have in return saved Bella.

He had never cried like this before. His entire body shook with sobs. Then again, he had never lost someone like Bella. Harry was so engrossed with his grief that he didn't notice the charms around him being deactivated. He felt a hand gently touch his shoulder. Harry pulled away from Bella and looked up. Sirius's face came into focus as he sat down beside Harry. He had tears in his eyes also. His handsome face was filled with sorrow as he looked at Bella

"S-Sirius! Sirius, look, look what happened!" Harry cried out as he looked at Bella.

Sirius wrapped an arm around Harry and another around his cousin. He held both close to him as soft sobs escaped him as well. He never wanted to lose Bella. That was partly why he had let her go with Harry last night. He had wanted to save her from the Kiss.

Sirius had been told only a few minutes ago by an anonymous call that Bella had been given the Kiss by Voldemort's Dementor and was being dumped in the middle of Hogsmeade. He had rushed out by himself. It didn't take long to find Harry as the surrounding people told him about Harry coming to rescue the notorious Death Eater, Bella.

Sirius looked at his cousin and felt a chill run through him. Bella's dark eyes had no life in them. She looked so...empty. 'Bella is no longer here. This is just her empty shell' Sirius told himself.

"Come on, Harry. We should get her out of here" Sirius said as he let go of the boy.

Harry pulled away from him but refused to let go of Bella.

"Where are you taking her?" Harry asked in a broken voice.

"Not to the Ministry. I'm taking her somewhere she'll be..." Sirius trailed off, not knowing how to finish his sentence. What was he supposed to say? Somewhere she'll be safe? Bella was gone. Her soul had been ripped away from her. This was just her body. It knew nothing. It could be sitting in a cell in Azkaban and it wouldn't know the difference.

"You won't send her to Azkaban, will you?" Harry asked, almost reading Sirius's mind.

Sirius shook his head. He didn't know what he would do, but the longer Harry was sitting here in the open, the more risk he was under. Sirius and Harry helped Bella to stand, but it seemed that she was unable to stand by herself. Sirius gathered her in his arms as Harry looked on in anguish.

"Harry?" Sirius asked as he saw the boy step away from him. He wanted Harry to come with him. He didn't think Harry should be alone at a time like this.

Harry wiped away his tears and took a step away from Sirius.

"I'll come once I've finished this. I remember the promise I made last night. I will come to see you, even if it's only once. I promise."

Chapter Fifty

Sirius could only think of one place he could go with Bella. He couldn't take her back to his house as it was used as the Headquarters of the Order. Even though Bella was gone, Sirius was sure that most of the Order members would insist in handing the body back to the Ministry so that it could be sent to Azkaban. Sirius didn't want that to happen. So, he was left with only one option, Godric's Hollow. He knew that James and Lily would help him in sorting something out.

Sirius had only just apparated to the back of the house when the door was flung open and James came running out to meet Sirius. He had obviously seen Sirius apparate from the window, holding a body in his arms.

"Sirius! What happened? Oh my God! Is that...is that..." James was staring at the empty shell that was Bella.

Sirius could only stagger a few steps forward causing James to quickly grab Bella's body from him. All Sirius's strength had left him. He was trying to be brave and strong in front of Harry but now that he was with his friend he was staring to break down himself.

James managed to carry Bella and help Sirius into the house. At once James placed Bella onto the sofa in the living room as gently as he could. He then rushed to help Sirius into the chair next to the sofa.

"LILY! LILY!" James shouted once Sirius had collapsed onto the chair.

At once a worried looking Lily came running downstairs.

"James! What's wrong? Why are you shouting...?" Lily trailed off as she took in the scene in her living room.

Sirius was sitting, with his head in his hands, looking very upset. A glance at the sofa told her why. Lily only just managed not to cry out in shock and surprise as she saw Bella lying on her sofa, her big dark eyes, strangely empty, staring at the ceiling.

“Oh Merlin! Sirius! What happened?” Lily could think of nothing else to say. It was unnerving to have a Death Eater in her home, but even more unsettling to have her lying like that, staring at the ceiling, completely ignoring everything and everyone around her. It was obvious that something was very wrong with Bella.

With much difficulty, Sirius told them what had happened. He had to stop many times to gather his emotions. He told them about the phone call he received, the residents of Hogsmeade informing him upon arrival that the Dark Prince had come to take Bellatrix away. Sirius finally broke down when he explained the scene that met him when he managed to find Harry and Bella.

By this point all three adults had tears in their eyes. James and Lily didn't feel any compassion for Bella. After all she was an adult who knew exactly what she was doing when she joined Voldemort. They felt the heartbreak that Sirius and Harry must have felt though and for that reason only, James and Lily were willing to help in any way they could.

James and Lily were both surprised that Harry had gotten to Bella first. How did he know what had happened and where to find her? They felt their heart break when Sirius told them how Harry had broken down and the way he had spoken to Sirius. James felt so helpless that his son was grieving and that there was no one there to comfort him. He felt a little relieved that Harry had let Sirius comfort him. It meant that Harry had realised that Sirius wasn't the enemy, especially after the Blake incident at Hogwarts.

Sirius had kept the fact that he had met Harry at the Ministry, when Bella had escaped, a secret. He hadn't even told James about it. Sirius knew that the Ministry had no evidence of who had rescued Bella and he wanted to keep it that way. Sirius was the only one who knew that it was in fact Harry who had rescued her. James wouldn't tell another soul about this either, but Sirius still felt that it was risky to say anything. Harry had enough things on his record without this being widely known as well.

“Where did Harry go?” Lily asked once Sirius finished telling his account of the incident.

"I don't know. But he promised me that once he's finished, he'll come home. He promised me" Sirius told the anxious looking parents.

James and Lily knew that this wasn't the right time to discuss this, so they just nodded their heads and continued to comfort their friend.

After Sirius calmed down, James asked him.

"What is it you want to do?"

Sirius looked up at him through puffy eyes.

"I...I don't know. I can't take her home with me, and I won't allow the Ministry to take charge and send her to Azkaban!" Sirius said very emotionally.

James and Lily secretly agreed that the empty shell lying on their sofa wouldn't know the difference but they kept quiet for the sake of their friend.

"I, I guess I will have to call Cissy, she'll want to take over. She was her sister" Sirius said in a small voice.

James knew that Sirius hated Narcissa, mostly because she married Lucius Malfoy and refused to let Sirius be anywhere near her family. Not that Sirius wanted to be friends with the likes of her filthy Death Eater husband, but still, Sirius felt she was family and that he should have at least been allowed to speak to Narcissa and her son, Draco Malfoy. Damien used to try and make him feel better by telling him what a stuck up, arrogant and shallow person Draco was and that Sirius was better off not knowing the likes of him.

"If you think that's the best thing to do, but don't you think she already knows? I mean her husband must have told her" Lily said in a comforting voice.

"If Cissy knew, then she would have gotten to her by now." Sirius answered.

They continued to discuss what they should do and whether Dumbledore should be involved. The three adults never noticed the

four concerned teens standing outside the door. Ron, Hermione, Ginny and Damien had been studying, in other words, looking for information on the last Horcrux, when they heard James shouting for Lily. They had all crept to the door to see what was going on. They heard everything that Sirius told them. They even got a peek at the lifeless looking body of Bella. The four teens quickly and quietly made their way back upstairs. Once safely in Damien's room, the four began panicking.

"Oh my God! That's just awful!" Hermione said at once.

"I know, the Kiss! And by Voldemort's orders no less. I mean she practically worshipped the man. To be given such a punishment...I can't even begin to imagine the pain" Ron added in.

"What should we do?" Ginny asked.

The other three looked at her with peculiar expressions.

"Uh, nothing. We can't do anything for her. Once the Kiss is administered there's no way to reverse it." Ron said, all the while looking at Ginny as if she had grown another head.

Ginny clenched her teeth in annoyance.

"About Harry! What should we do about Harry?" she asked through clenched teeth.

The other three quickly realised their mistake and looked embarrassedly at each other.

"Uh, I don't know? What can we do? I mean he's not going to want to speak to us right now. He'll be too upset." Damien said sadly.

He knew enough about his brother to know that Harry would not want anyone to see him when he was grieving like this. At the same time though, it seemed pretty cruel to leave him alone at a time like this.

"We should go to see him. I mean what if he does something...you know...reckless! He might be so angry at Voldemort, he might go and try to attack him" Hermione said in a nervous voice.

“Surely he won’t! He knows that there is no hope to defeat Voldemort until his last Horcrux is destroyed.” Ron said at once.

“Harry does know that, but he’s not going to be thinking clearly right now, is he? You all heard what Sirius said, Harry was completely heartily broken. I think we should go to him. He needs friends right now” Ginny said as she stood up.

“I think it would be better if I called him first. To see if he wants us to come and see him” Damien said as he pulled out his mobile phone.

They all agreed that this would be the best option. Harry didn’t answer his phone the first two times. The third time Damien dialled his number, Harry answered at the second ring. His voice sounded strangely hoarse. Damien’s stomach turned at the thought of Harry crying.

“Harry! It’s Damien. I...I heard about Bellatrix.” Damien managed to say quickly.

There was no answer on the other end of the phone, so Damien continued talking.

“I’m so sorry, Harry. Are you okay?” Damien asked, not knowing what else to say to him. His own words sounded hollow and empty but Damien really didn’t know what else he should say. Harry still didn’t answer but Damien knew that he was listening since he could hear Harry’s breathing on the other end.

“I wanted to see if you were okay. Harry? Do you want us to come over and see you?” Damien asked, beginning to think that he should have just agreed with Ginny and gone to see Harry. It was obvious that Harry was suffering and needed someone there with him. However, at this point Harry finally spoke up.

“Just leave me alone, Damien. I don’t want to see anyone just now.”

With that said, Harry hung up, leaving Damien lost. He really wanted to help Harry but he couldn’t go to him now since Harry told him not to.

Damien knew better than to do something directly against Harry's words so he and the rest didn't go to see Harry. They all agreed to give him some space. The four teens were ushered to the Burrow by Lily later that day. None of the adults knew that the four teens had heard and seen Bella. But the four had agreed that they wouldn't breathe a word of this to anyone.

xx

Damien didn't speak to Harry for four days after the incident with Bella. Every time he called Harry's mobile, it was switched off. Bella had been moved away from Godric's Hollow but where she was wasn't disclosed to anyone. Damien couldn't ask his parents because then he would have to admit to eavesdropping on them. He didn't think his uncle Sirius would like the fact the Damien saw him when he was so upset.

The four teens decided to continue gathering whatever information they could about the last Horcrux, the black diary. They figured that they could spend this time getting whatever information they could. That way when Harry recovered, he would have some good news. However, there was no information on the black diary that the four teens could find. They didn't know anything about the diary and so didn't know even where to begin searching.

Damien was at Hermione's house and after a stressful 'study session' and they all decided to take a long walk to clear their heads. It was now the second week of May and the days were getting brighter and warmer. The four teens walked slowly along the streets, talking in low voices about what they could do to better their search. They weren't really thinking about where they were going and soon found themselves a good distance away from Hermione's house.

"I think we should head back. Your parents will be back soon" Ron said as he slipped an arm around Hermione. He quickly pulled it away from her, looking a little red. He did that a lot these days. He would say something complimentary to Hermione and then try and cover it up or he would try to hold her hand and then get nervous and let her go.

‘God, he needs to just come out and say it’ Ginny thought to herself, as she saw Ron trying to hide his blush from Hermione.

They were just about to cross the road when Damien held onto Ginny’s hand, making her and the other two stop behind him.

“Damy, what...” Ginny started to say but looked at the direction Damien was pointing at.

A little distance away, a messy haired boy was walking towards a café. Damien only caught a glimpse of him but he was certain it was Harry. That wasn’t the strange thing though. Walking alongside with Harry was a certain blond haired Slytherin. Ginny and Damien pointed out Harry and Draco to Ron and Hermione. At once the four teens began quickly following the two boys.

Why was Harry talking to Draco? What could that Slytherin want now? Damien was certain that once Harry had left Voldemort, it meant that Harry’s and Draco’s friendship was over as well. Harry and Draco didn’t seem to be talking to each other as both boys were walking silently towards the café. Damien and the others agreed that Draco was not safe and they wanted to make sure he didn’t pose any threat to Harry.

Harry and Draco both disappeared inside the café. The four teens knew that they couldn’t barge their way inside the café and Harry would get annoyed with them if they did, so that left only one option. Hermione and Ron stayed outside the café while Ginny and Damien slipped under the invisibility cloak. Damien had made a habit of taking the cloak with him wherever he went.

Once the two were safely concealed they waited until the door of the café opened by someone entering or leaving. They snuck inside as two couples were leaving and at once spotted Harry sitting with Draco. Damien and Ginny manoeuvred themselves carefully around the crowded café and finally managed to get close enough to hear what Harry and Draco were saying.

Damien and Ginny crouched behind a table that was vacated and listened hard to what the conversation was between the two boys.

"I guess I should have known it was going to happen. They were really getting on each others nerves lately. They were fighting constantly, but it still comes as a shock. I never thought she would leave him, but there you are. Mum's finally separated from dad"

Damien and Ginny both gasped at what Draco had said. His parents were splitting up! Even though Damien hated Draco he couldn't help but feel a little sorry for him. He didn't think it was fair for any child to go through what Draco was probably going through right now.

Harry didn't say anything but took a long sip from his mug. Damien watched his brother closely. Harry had definitely lost some weight recently. His eyes seemed to be darker and when he did finally speak, his voice sounded different, like he hadn't spoken to anyone in days.

"Are you going to be leaving at the same time as your mum?" Harry asked, not looking at Draco.

"No, I've still got a few things to take care off. Mum will be taking Auntie Bella with her. I think Uncle Marcus is coming over to bring them home. Uncle Marcus always told Mum to leave Dad and come and live with him in Spain, but Mum was adamant that the marriage would one day work out. With what happened to Auntie Bella though, I guess it was the last straw for Mum. She just couldn't believe Dad didn't try and help her."

There was a sad note in Draco's voice. That was something neither Damien nor Ginny had ever thought possible for Draco Malfoy. The way he used to talk about his father and mother, everyone was under the impression that Draco had a happy family with no problems. Damien and Ginny shared a look before looking over at Harry.

Harry also looked very uncomfortable. He shifted in his chair and looked away from Draco before speaking.

"Is...is there any chance that Bella might be...you know cured? It wasn't a real Dementor, so maybe there might be something that can be done?"

Draco shook his head.

"I don't think so, mate. The Dementor might not have been real, but the effects were still real. She's gone" Draco said sadly.

Harry closed his mouth and just nodded his head awkwardly. Damien could feel the tension between the two friends. At last Draco spoke up.

"It wasn't your fault. No one blames you, Harry. Stop doing this to yourself."

Harry looked away from Draco and seemed to be having difficulty in speaking.

"You don't know that" he almost whispered.

"Harry! You're acting like an idiot! You didn't do anything to her. It wasn't you who cursed her" Draco said angrily at him. Both Damien and Ginny were shocked at the way Draco was speaking to him. They didn't think Draco would have the nerve to speak to Harry like that.

Harry looked at Draco, with eyes full of guilt.

"I may as well have" he said quietly.

"What?" Draco asked.

"I had the ring. I had the ring and I didn't give it back to her. I knew she would be punished for losing it, but I never thought that she would be given such a punishment. I'm responsible for her getting the Kiss"

Harry said all of this very quietly but the words were ringing in Damien's ears. 'Merlin! He thinks he's responsible. God, why didn't I ignore his words and gone to see him. He obviously needed help' Damien thought miserably to himself.

Draco was looking at Harry, apparently speechless at Harry's revelation. After a few minutes Draco cleared his throat to speak.

“That still doesn’t make you responsible. You couldn’t have given her the ring back. I know that. You never thought that he would give her the Kiss, no one thought that.” Draco tried to comfort Harry but it was clear from Harry’s expression that he didn’t believe him.

“Anyway, I just thought that you should know that we’re all leaving soon. I’m going to be leaving as soon as the final dealings are over with the Malfoy manor and other things. I just thought that if you wanted to see her again, you know for the last time then you can tomorrow.”

Harry didn’t say anything and just shook his head before taking another sip of whatever it was that he was drinking.

“Isn’t it dangerous for you to be here by yourself? Maybe you should leave with your Mum.” Harry said, trying to change the subject from Bella.

Draco smiled sadly and shook his blond head.

“You know how things are with Father. He’s never been one to watch his words with me. I don’t think there is anything he can say or do to me that will hurt anymore. He’ll never raise his wand on me, I don’t think so anyway.”

Damien felt so sorry for Draco. He really had no idea things were that tough for him. ‘He shouldn’t have acted like a spoilt brat then’ his mind told him.

“You know ever since you left him, I’ve steered clear of him. We both know how fond he was of me. I didn’t think facing him would be particularly clever of me. That’s when I really got thinking. It turns out, I only wanted to be in his circle if you were there. I guess I got used to you saving my ass from him all the time. If you weren’t there, I know I would be killed in the first instance. Father knew it too. He ordered me to stay away from him.”

Damien and Ginny shared another glance. They knew exactly who this ‘he’ was that Draco was referring too. He was talking about Lord Voldemort. It shocked Damien to learn that Draco didn’t want to be a Death Eater if Harry wasn’t there. It seemed like such a childish thing.

If your best friend isn't doing something you don't want to do it either. But Damien gathered from what Draco had said that Lord Voldemort didn't really like him very much. It seemed Draco was only tolerated because of Harry. With Harry gone, Voldemort would try to hurt Draco, since he couldn't when Harry was around.

"I need to go now. Listen, Harry, think about what I said. You should seriously consider it." Draco said as he stood up.

Harry just looked at Draco and stood up as well.

"I need to finish this. Once it's all over I might take you up on your offer" Harry said as he pulled a few notes of muggle money out of his pocket and placed them on the table.

Damien felt his heart skip a beat. What offer was this? Why would Draco make Harry an offer? What could he possibly want Harry to do?

Damien never got a chance to think about this as he and Ginny had to move out of the way so that Harry and Draco could leave. They both watched as Harry and Draco left the café. Slowly and carefully, Damien and Ginny left as well. They met up with a worried looking Ron and Hermione. All four left to go back to Hermione's house before saying a word about what the conversation was about.

At the end all four were feeling sorry for Draco and worried about Harry. What offer could Draco have made to Harry? Something just didn't feel right. Damien had a bad feeling about this offer, something about it just didn't feel right.

xx

It wasn't until the following day that Harry called Damien. He left a message on his phone, asking them to meet with him at the Travel Inn. The four made their way to the Travel Inn in their usual way. As soon as they came into the room, they felt the uncomfortable tension in the air. This was the first time they had met after what had happened with Bella and the four teens were uncertain about how to talk to Harry. They weren't sure if they should mention it or just ignore

the whole thing. Harry made it easy for them, a few seconds after they all came inside the room.

“Don’t say anything about what happened. We have to concentrate on the last Horcrux”

The four nodded their heads and were relieved that they didn’t have to talk about Bella. The truth was that they couldn’t really pay any condolences to Harry since all of them hated Bella. The female Death Eater would have happily tortured them all to death on Voldemort’s orders. But for Harry’s sake they had to say something nice about her. Thankfully Harry had given them the easy option. Don’t talk about her at all.

All five teens were once again in deep conversation about where the last Horcrux could be. They knew for certain that it was the black diary. But the location of it was the difficult thing to work out.

Harry explained to all of them the history of the diary, who it originally belonged to. The others were surprised Voldemort had chosen such an item to use as a Horcrux.

“Alright, let’s think about this. Voldemort had used something belonging to his grandfather. This is the only item that had a connection to him, other than the Slytherin pendant. The diary is different to all the other Horcruxes. It belonged to his grandfather. It’s a part of his personal life. I don’t think it’s going to be in a museum or in the Ministry. It most likely is going to be protected by himself.” Hermione read out all the notes she had made while the discussion had taken place.

“Harry, you don’t think he might have used a place that he had a personal connection to. I mean some place that has a link to him?” Ginny asked thoughtfully.

“What do you mean?” Harry replied, confused with how this was going to be useful.

“Well, think about it. Every Horcrux had been placed somewhere or given to someone Voldemort had a connection with. The **Gryffindor sword** was placed in Hogwarts and you said that Voldemort felt that

Hogwarts was like his first home. The **Hufflepuff cup** was placed in the Ministry because Voldemort wants to take over the Ministry. That is his ultimate aim isn't it. To take over the wizarding world. The **Golden Quill** was placed in a museum that was founded by Salazar Slytherin. I read that when we entered the building. It said that Salazar Slytherin wanted to show off all the magical artefacts that were in his possession at the time. The **Slytherin pendant** and the **Black ring** were given to you and Bella because he was closest to both of you."

Ginny finished and looked at Harry. She didn't want to bring up Bella but she had to finish off her theory about the Horcruxes. Harry didn't say anything but just looked deep in thought.

"So...so I think it may be possible that the diary falls into a similar pattern. A place that Voldemort feels close to, or has a sense of power..." Ginny stopped talking as Harry's head snapped up. He was looking at Ginny with a strange look in his emerald eyes.

"What did you say?" he asked.

Ginny looked a little startled. Harry looked a little unnerving right now.

"Um... I said that Voldemort must have put the diary in a place he feels close to, or has a sense of power from" Ginny repeated.

Harry seemed to think something over. He didn't speak again for a few minutes.

"Um...Harry? Are you okay?" Ron asked, fearing that something was wrong with the boy.

Suddenly Harry looked up at Ron and smiled. 'Okay, that's not helping the crazy image' Ron thought to himself.

"I just figured out where the diary is. It makes perfect sense." Harry exclaimed.

"Where!" all four asked at the same time.

“It’s like Ginny said, the diary is going to be in a place that Voldemort feels power from, a place that has a connection to him. And since this particular Horcrux is connected to his past, I think the location of it must be linked to his past as well.” Harry explained.

The reason Harry had looked so spaced out became clear and all four sighed inwardly. Harry continued.

“I think that the Horcrux is going to be placed in a location that is linked to his childhood. Now, I can safely say that it’s not going to be the orphanage that he grew up in, since he hated that place. It can’t be the Gaunt house since that place was torn down years and years ago. So that only leaves one place. The cave.”

Everyone looked at Harry, hoping he would explain further. Harry continued after taking in their reactions.

“Voldemort told me that the very first time he realised that he had power over others was when he and the children of the orphanage were taken on a trip. There he had found a cave that had snakes in them. Voldemort didn’t know he could talk to snakes until then. There were these two children that always bullied him. Voldemort led them into the cave and then, well, he got the snakes to attack them. He instructed the snakes not to bite them since he didn’t want to explain the two dead bodies, but he freaked them out. He actually said the words, ‘the first time I felt true power was when I ordered the attack on the two children’. If anything, the diary is placed in that cave. I’m certain of it”

Everyone was feeling overwhelmed with this news. If Harry was right and the diary really was in this cave then that would mean that they all had succeeded. After the diary was destroyed, it would make Voldemort a mortal again. It would mean that the wizarding world be one step nearer to getting rid of Voldemort altogether!

“Okay, so where is this cave.” Damien asked feeling goose bumps on his arms in excitement.

“I have a rough idea of the location. I’m not entirely sure though. But I’ll find it” Harry said.

“No, Harry. We’ll find it” Ron said standing up to face him.

“Yeah, we’re all going with you” Damien added.

Harry was looking at them with disbelief.

“Are you lot out of your mind? You can’t come with me! I have to find the place and it can take me a couple of days to find it. I can’t have you lot dragging me back. We need to do this quickly.”

“Exactly Harry, we need to do this quickly. Voldemort is probably guarding his last Horcrux with everything he’s got. You shouldn’t go alone. And we won’t be dragging you back. If anything you can use our help. Five pair of hands is more beneficial than just one pair of hands” Hermione exclaimed.

Harry was still not convinced.

“What about your parents? They’re surely going to notice the fact that you guys are missing. What will you tell them?” he asked.

At this the four teens looked around themselves.

“We’ll...we’ll tell them were going on a camping trip” Damien said after a few moments of thinking.

“Yeah, that’ll wash down well. ‘Hey mum, dad. I know we’re in the midst of a fierce war, but I’m just going to go and sleep in the open for a couple of days. See you later, if I survive’ use your head Damy!” Ginny snapped at him.

Damien only scowled and then looked at Harry, who looked like he was trying to stop himself from smiling.

“I think we should just tell them that we’re staying at each others houses for a few days. Damien, Ron and Ginny can say that you are staying at my place and I’ll tell mum and dad that I’m staying with the Damien. We’ll say that we have plans to do a lot of studying and that I’ve made all of you take tests. That’ll be believable” Hermione said after a few minutes of careful thinking.

Chapter Fifty One

The five teens set off for their last mission together in the early morning hours. The sooner they got to their destination the better it was for everyone. Damien, Ron and Ginny didn't have any trouble convincing their parents about where they were going. It turned out that the Order was having some problem of its own and the parents were only too happy to have their children out of the way. They were sure that the Grangers would look after them. Hermione's parents were more reluctant about letting Hermione stay for a few days in a wizard home. They had been reading the Daily Prophet that was delivered to their house, and were becoming increasingly concerned about the safety of their daughter since she was apart of that world.

Hermione had finally managed to convince her parents to let her go to 'the Potters' by assuring them that Mr Potter was an Auror and that his home was the safest place. She also took her mobile phone and promised to phone them everyday.

So, with everything set, the five teens made their way to the train station. They had to catch the muggle train to get to a certain small village, where the orphanage was that Voldemort had grown up in. Harry knew that the cave was located in the surrounding area. All of their luggage was shrunk and placed in their pockets. No one spoke as they travelled on the train. They could have apparated to the village but only Harry knew the exact location. Again, Harry had tried to talk the teens out of coming with him.

"It's only going to be harder to manage this journey with all of us. It'll be a lot easier and quicker if I go by myself" Harry had said as the four teens prepared to leave.

"We already told you, Harry. We're all coming with you. If you don't take us with you, we'll make our own way. And you remember what happened the last time we split up to look for a Horcrux." Ginny said as everyone turned to look pointedly at Ron.

Ginny was of course referring to the blunder that Ron had made with the Golden Quill. Because of his haste, all of them could have lost their lives.

Harry looked at Ron's red face and fought down a laugh at his expression. He turned to look at Ginny who was smirking at her brother. He thought about joking that he would obliterate all of their memories so that they couldn't remember about the Horcruxes and leaving them here, but he could never do that to them. Instead Harry shrugged his shoulders and led them out of the Travel Inn. Maybe them coming with him might be useful. For the first time in his life, Harry didn't mind the company of the four teens. He realised as they boarded the train that he had been in regular contact with them for so long now, that he almost felt *comfortable* with them around. One in particular made him feel, almost glad that he had agreed for them to join him. He looked again at the red haired girl as she sat down next to Hermione. Harry finally let his face break into a smile, before hiding it again.

xx

The Order was in chaos. It was now the third day since the Order found out about the five destroyed Horcruxes. Of course the destruction of the very first Horcrux was known to all of them, since the entire Order had watched Snape's memory of it being blasted by Harry. But the other Horcruxes that were disappearing from the world was a mystery. The Minister had firstly dismissed the idea that these powerful, irreplaceable objects that were stolen were in fact Horcruxes belonging to Voldemort.

Like always, the Minister was more worried about his reputation than the problem at hand. If the Wizarding world found out that Voldemort had made Horcruxes and that these items were of such magical importance, then he would definitely get thrown out.

However, Albus Dumbledore knew that these items were Horcruxes and he also knew who it was that was destroying them. He had informed the Order of his findings. Dumbledore and a few trusted Order members had tried endlessly to destroy the Black ring that had been taken from Bella. No matter what spell, hex or curse they used, they hadn't even managed to scratch the surface of the ring. Dumbledore knew that Harry had been the one who had helped Bella to escape. He also knew that Harry must have taken the ring. Dumbledore had always believed that Harry was the one, and the

only one, who could destroy Voldemort and this just proved it. Dumbledore and many other Aurors couldn't even cause a scratch on the Horcrux, while Harry had managed to completely disintegrate the Slytherin Horcrux by just willing it to be destroyed.

Dumbledore had wondered about Harry's eyes turning from their emerald green to the darkest black. He had concluded that it was something Harry had possessed from a young age. He remembered the memory of Harry helping those two children, when he was only seven years old. Just before he helped them, Dumbledore remembered seeing Harry's eyes darken. The reason behind it was something that would have to be worked out later. The problem was that the Minister had now agreed that the objects were in fact Horcruxes, but he refused to believe that Harry was destroying them. He was adamant that Harry had never left Voldemort's side and was collecting the Horcruxes for safe keeping, in case the Ministry got to them.

No one could convince to the Minister that he was wrong. With the exception of the Slytherin pendant, no one had seen Harry destroy any other Horcruxes. They had no proof that Harry was in fact helping them get rid of Voldemort.

The meeting that Dumbledore had called was to convince his Order members. Most of them agreed with Dumbledore. They had a lot of faith in him but since Harry had double crossed them before, their faith was wavering. Most of them had trusted Dumbledore to keep Harry in Hogwarts and to convert him to the Light. With Harry escaping and then attacking the Hogwarts Express, many Order members found it difficult to believe that that same boy was now trying to rid the world of the same evil that he was once a part of.

The only members who openly argued with Dumbledore though were Moody and a few others. James had stopped sitting in on the meetings. He would get a debrief afterwards. This was mainly because he couldn't control the urge to kill Moody. Every time he opened his mouth he would spew some filth about Harry.

James sat in the other room in Grimmauld place, thinking about what it would be like to finally put everything behind him. He knew that

Harry had promised he would come home, Sirius had told that. James wished Harry would come home soon. He had not seen his son for so long now. The last time he heard his son's voice was the phone call he had made after leaving Voldemort. That still brought tears in his eyes. Harry had called him 'Dad'. James had thought he would never get to hear Harry calling him that.

The door opened and Lily came inside. She looked infuriated.

"Lily? What's the matter?" James asked as he saw his wife storm over and sit next to him.

"That...that...Auror! I swear I'm going to kill him!" Lily shouted as she sat down.

"Who? Moody! What did the stupid bastard say now?" James asked, feeling heat rise to his face.

"He...he...oh, I can't even repeat it! I swear to you James, that man will die at my hands!" Lily said again. James noticed that there was actual steam coming out of her wand.

"Lils, what did you do?" James asked, knowing that Lily had just used her wand.

Lily looked at her husband and shook her head.

"He deserved it! Won't be thinking about handing Harry over to no one when he's got no bones in his arms!"

James could have laughed if the situation wasn't so tense.

"You, you made the bones in his arms disappear! Oh, Lily. That's brilliant!" James said as he smiled at his wife. His smile disappeared though as Lily looked up at him with eyes full of tears.

"It's not just him though, is it? Everyone there wants to destroy Harry. How many can we stop? No, James, this isn't about us at all. Moody was a good friend and now you both can't even sit in the same room and I can't believe that I actually hexed him like that! I don't know how this can be fixed. What are we going to do? Why can't everyone just

leave my son alone? He's already going through hell because of everything that happened to him! Why can't they help us in finding him and keeping him safe? Why don't they believe Dumbledore? They used to believe in his every word! They would never disrespect him the way Moody did just now!"

James put his arms around his hysterical wife and tried to calm her down. He had no words of comfort though. Simply because he didn't know the answers to her questions. Instead he held her tight and let her cry.

"I j-just want him to come h-home! I want m-my baby back!" Lily whispered through sobs into James's chest.

James whispered words of assurance. He told her that Harry would eventually come home. James would make sure of that. But deep down, James knew that Harry coming home wasn't the solution to their problem. It was how they could keep him safe for the rest of his life. Still, James prayed that Harry would come home. James would give everything he had to keep Harry safe. He closed his eyes and let the burning tears fall through closed eyelids.

xx

Damien trudged up the steep slope and tried not to fall behind. They were surrounded by steep hills and everywhere he looked he could only see enormous looming trees surrounding him. He ran a few steps ahead and caught up with Ginny. Harry was leading the way and seemed to be able to walk through the thick woods a lot easier than the rest. They had only been walking for around two hours and already Damien was starting to feel tired.

Harry was leading the way and was a good few steps ahead of the rest. Hermione and Ron were walking together, but they weren't talking to each other. They were too busy concentrating on not tripping over anything and not to lose sight of Harry. Ginny and Damien were bringing up the rear.

They continued to walk through the dense woods, deeper and deeper, until all signs of the small village behind them disappeared. Harry had no definite directions to this cave, after all he had never been to it

before, but he was letting his good sense of direction lead him to it. He knew that this cave was pretty secluded and that it was going to be magically locked. All Harry had to do was get close enough to detect it. Harry was well aware of the four struggling teens behind him, trying desperately to catch up with him, but Harry couldn't really slow down for them.

After a few more hours Harry had to stop to let the others rest a little. He stifled a snigger at the red and puffed out looking faces of the four teens. Ron looked the worst. They all sat down and Damien brought out the five bottles of water he had packed. They all sat in the shade of the trees and sipped their cool water. The weather was getting very warm as it was middle of June now. Harry only took a small sip of water and was too busy looking around. He had no idea how much farther they had to go. It seemed this cave was very deeply hidden.

"Hey Harry, I wanted to ask you something"

Harry turned around to face Ron.

"Um, well, remember when you came to the Duelling Club? You had brought up that awesome shield! I was just wondering...is it...is it really difficult to do that?" Ron asked with a little hesitation.

Harry looked at Ron for a moment before answering. It was apparent that Ron had wanted to ask about Harry's duelling skills long before now, but a situation had always arisen that had not made this possible. Harry thought for a moment and then casually answered him.

"No, it's not difficult. Anyone can do it, if they can control their magic to that level"

Ron's eyes seem to brighten and Harry already knew the question that was coming from him.

"Harry, can you show me how to cast that?"

Harry thought for a moment.

“Now isn’t the right time. We’re supposed to be searching for the cave.”

“I know, it’s just that, well, if we’re attacked, at least we can protect ourselves a little better” Ron said in an excited voice.

Harry pondered over that for a moment. The shield wasn’t that hard to conjure in reality and Ron did have a good point about the need to protect themselves.

Harry decided that he would show them how to conjure the shield later on in the evening. Harry knew they weren’t going to be reaching the cave today. It was going to take a day or two to get to it so when they retired for the night, Harry would show them what they had to do.

With that promise, the four teens seemed to perk up a little and followed Harry through the woods, without a single complaint.

xx

Ron had packed his fathers magical tent. It wasn’t used that often so no one would find it missing. Hermione and Ginny had packed plenty of food, but Harry insisted that they didn’t eat too much as they had no idea how long they were going to have to spend looking for this cave.

After a small dinner the tent was put up. Hermione and Ginny put up there tent which wasn’t magical, it belonged to Hermione’s parents. But since it was only the two girls sharing this tent, it wasn’t too bad. The boys tent was much bigger with a bathroom and everything. The four teens settled down, quiet content with the warm night, feeling the aches and pains of the day fade away. No one, except for Harry, had realised how tiring this journey was going to be.

Harry cast another charm around them, wandlessly, so that they would be alerted if anything dangerous came their way that night. As Harry settled down next to Damien, he noticed everyone looking expectantly at him.

“What?” Harry asked, eyeing all of the excited faces around him.

"You said you would show us how to conjure the shield tonight" Damien said at once.

'Oh damn, forgot about that' Harry thought to himself.

"Yeah, okay" Harry said out loud and stood up. Everyone else stood up as well, looking eager to learn from Harry.

Harry turned to face Ron, since it was Ron who asked him about the shield.

"Okay, the first thing that you have to do is gather up as much energy as you can from your core."

Harry stopped as the expression on Ron's face changed to confusion.

"What?" Harry asked, a little annoyed.

"Um, my core?" Ron asked, looking as if he had never heard of the word.

Harry clenched his teeth in annoyance. He didn't have a lot of patience, especially when he was tired.

"Yeah, you know, your magical core. The one that contains your magical stores."

Ron turned to look at Hermione and then answered.

"I know what a magical core is. I just don't know what you mean by gathering energy from it"

Harry ran a hand through his hair and sighed. Damien had to stop himself from saying how much Harry looked like their dad.

"Okay! Let's start at the beginning then. Do you know where your magical core is?" Harry asked, thinking that there was no way a sixteen year old wizard couldn't possibly know the location of the core.

Ron however was looking a little bewildered. He looked hesitantly at Hermione, but the brown haired girl just looked at him. She obviously

knew where the core was but seemed a little disappointed that Ron didn't know. Ron awkwardly lifted a hand and placed it over his heart.

"Here?" he asked uncertainly.

The look on Harry's face was priceless. He seemed to be biting his tongue so that he wouldn't say anything to the red haired boy. Instead he walked over to Ron, and trying really hard not to hurt the stupid boy, he pulled Ron's hand away from his chest and placed it on his forehead.

Damien and Ginny were doubled over in silent fits of laughter and Hermione was also trying not to laugh at the look on Ron's face. The blush on Ron's face was as vivid as his hair. He slowly lowered his hand and looked dumbly at Harry.

Harry moved a few steps away and looked at him.

"You have to learn to gather your core. That's what you should have learnt from the beginning. Everyone has a different core, just like the wands you use. That's why certain wands work better than others. You can't use my wand just like I can't use yours, because our wands link with our core and use the energy from there to perform magic. If a muggle was to lift a wand, it wouldn't do anything, since they have no magical core. Muggles use a different type of magic. They call it 'mind over matter'. They force their mind into a certain way of thinking." Harry stopped to let his words sink in. The undivided attention he was getting from the four teens was making Harry a little uncomfortable. He had never been one to teach anyone anything.

"So, in order to conjure up the full body shield, you have to learn to manipulate your core. You have to let your magic become more like an instinct than anything else. The strength of the shield depends on how strong your core is. You can't make your core stronger. It's what you're born with"

Ron looked a little disappointed with that news.

"So, if my shield isn't strong, it will fail to keep out the curses?" Ron asked, feeling that it was a waste of time learning this since he didn't consider himself to be a strong wizard.

“You can’t block yourself from every curse, but if you can bring up a full body shield you can save yourself from some nasty curses. If all of you stand together and cast your body shields at the same time, they would fuse together to make it impenetrable.” Harry explained.

At this, the four teens seemed to brighten up.

“Okay, so how do we gather our energy” Damien asked, taking out his wand.

“You can put that away. You can’t use your wands just yet. I’ll try and teach you without using your wands. If you learn the method, you can try it practically, once your home, or if the need arises here” Harry said quietly.

Harry explained the best he could, trying to remember how he was taught this spell. His heart did a somersault in his chest as he remembered who it was that had taught him the full body shield. Lord Voldemort had spent many hours teaching him. Harry shrugged the memory away and continued to concentrate on the four in front of him.

They practised for two hours by which time none of them felt that they had achieved what Harry had explained. Tired and a little disappointed in themselves, the four teens settled for the night. Harry assured them that with more practise, they would be fine. Harry was hoping that they didn’t need to use any type of defence while they were in the woods. He didn’t want to think about how bad things could get.

xx

It wasn’t until the third day that the five teens finally managed to get to the cave. Ron had been practising the full body shield at every opportunity and just last night he had managed to get a very faint wisp of yellow light around him. He was practising all this without his wand, so for him to get anything like this wandlessly was a great deal for him. Harry told a beaming Ron that when he cast the same spell with a wand it would most likely form a yellow coloured bubble around him.

That had inspired the rest to keep on concentrating on bringing up their shields as well. Only Ron and Hermione managed to get a reaction from the spell. Hermione had shimmering pink energy float around her before disappearing. This made Damien and Ginny the only ones who couldn't get the spell to work.

"I don't really need it anyway, I already have all the protection I need" Damien boasted as he pointed to the Lahoo Jisteen around his neck.

Harry didn't say anything but threw a glance in his brother's direction. It was the middle of the afternoon when they finally pushed their way through the thick branches and found themselves standing in front of a very daunting looking cave. It seemed as if the sunlight, somehow didn't manage to get to it. It was draped in darkness and even the air around the cave seemed to chill you to the bone.

"Oh my...Merlin! Is this it?" Ron asked as he looked at the cave. It was not somewhere he wanted to go.

Harry looked around and saw fear and reluctance on their faces. He himself felt the chill of dread creep up on him. They all walked towards the cave, in a tight group. Once they were at the mouth of the cave they realised with a jolt of shock that the entrance was completely caved in. There was no way to go in. Harry took out his wand and gestured to the rest to do so as well. Harry assumed that this cave and its surrounding area were so heavily protected by magic that there was no way they would get caught casting any spells.

The five teens pointed their wands at the mouth of the cave and shouted, 'Wingardium Leviosa'. However the rocks blocking the entrance continued to stay there. They all shouted other curses in unison, including 'Reducto' and many other spells.

They all stood looking at the blocked entrance. They had come so close and now they couldn't do anything to get inside. Three days had been utterly wasted.

"Come on, we should get going. It's no use" Ron led Hermione and Ginny away from the cave and with Damien a few steps behind, they glumly walked a few steps away.

Harry stood where he was, facing the entrance. He wasn't going to give up now. This was the last of the Horcruxes. He wasn't going to turn away. There was a way to get inside here. There had to be. Suddenly an idea came to Harry and he took a few more steps towards the cave.

Harry slowly extended his hand towards the mouth of the cave and started hissing instructions to it.

"Open up, I command you" Harry hissed in parseltongue.

The four teens froze in their steps and turned around to see Harry speaking in the ancient language of the serpents. None of them knew that Harry was a parselmouth. Ron and Hermione had looks of discomfort on their faces. It was very creepy to hear someone hissing like that. Damien was, as usual, awed by his brother's magical abilities. It didn't bother him at all. Ginny was completely enthralled by Harry. She stood transfixed as the weird hissing sounds filled the air around them.

"Damn, even that sounds sexy" Ginny whispered.

Hermione threw her a sharp look and elbowed her in the ribs. Ginny threw a glare back at her and rubbed her side. She couldn't help it if she was attracted to everything Harry did.

Harry repeated his instructions in parseltongue three times before the rocks started shifting. The sounds of the heavy rocks being moved out of the way filled the woods and the ground seemed to shake. The four teens stood where they were, watching as the rocks moved aside, creating a pathway into the cave.

Harry took a few steps towards the entrance and then looked behind him. He gestured to them to follow him quickly. At once the four teens snapped out of the trance they were in and ran to join him. As they walked into the cave, they heard the rocks move back to close the entrance. Ron tried not to panic and walked with Hermione, holding their wands out in front of them. No one spoke as they made their way down into the depths of this cave. Surprisingly, there was no need to cast a 'lumos' charm as the cave seemed to be filled with a glowing light.

Harry stopped walking near a set of steps, leading deeper down into the cave. The four teens halted to a stop behind him.

“Ron” Harry said quietly.

“Yeah” Ron answered, wondering what Harry wanted to say at this point.

“No matter what, **don’t touch anything!**” Harry said without turning back to look at him.

Ron was bewildered at receiving such instructions.

“Okay, but why...” Ron’s words died in his throat as Harry moved out of the way. The reason why the cave was glowing became clear and Ron felt his jaw drop in amazement.

At the bottom of these steps, there were what seemed to be mountains of jewels, heaped together. They were responsible for the shimmering light source inside the cave. Hermione, Ginny and Damien had similar expressions to Ron.

They all stood, looking stupidly at the treasures in front of them. Shimmering jewels in all colours along with heaps of gold and silver, littered the ground of the cave. Even one of these precious stones would be enough to make Ron and his family live comfortably for the rest of their lives.

They followed Harry slowly down the steps, all the while eyeing the glowing jewels.

“Um...why can’t Ron touch anything” Damien asked, trying to rip his eyes away from the mountain of gold, only inches away from him.

“Because everything you see here is cursed. It’s only placed here to trap any intruders.” Harry explained as he continued to lead the way.

Ron felt his heart flutter back to its original place in his chest. There was no point in getting anything if it was cursed. They followed Harry quietly, ignoring the inviting treasure.

They moved away from the jewels and down a small passageway. Harry stopped every few steps, trying to figure out where to go. The passageway they ended up taking was so narrow that the five teens had to form a single line to walk through it.

"Harry, how do you know where to go?" Ginny whispered as she struggled to keep up.

"I don't" he whispered back.

Ginny could swear she saw him flash a smile at her. She shook her head and continued to tread carefully on the uneven ground.

At long last the passageway opened up so they could all walk together.

"Finally! That was a bit of a tight squeeze!" Ron exclaimed as he turned the corner and met up with the rest.

No one answered him and Ron looked ahead of him to see what was wrong. He wished he hadn't.

Facing them was what seemed to be a sea of molten lava. The red, fiery liquid seemed to be forming a huge wave. It was rapidly reaching the ceiling of the cave.

"Harry!" Hermione cried out as she held onto his hand.

"No one move! Stay where you are" Harry shouted over the roaring of the fire.

Ron had already tried to go back and found that the area behind them had completely closed. There was no way they could go back.

"We're trapped!" he shouted, panicking over the horrible death they were about to suffer.

"Ron! Don't move, every one stay where you are, it'll only get worse!" Harry tried to explain.

“How can it get worse?” Damien shouted as he too backed up against the wall.

“Your fear will make it real. If you don’t show any fear and stay where you are, it won’t harm you!” Harry shouted.

Ron seriously doubted that. He could feel the heat from the lava already. He watched in terror as the wave of lava began rapidly heading towards them. In a few moments the wave of molten lava would wash over all of them.

“Trust me! Stay where you are! Don’t move at all. Don’t fear it, it’s not really here!” Harry shouted again.

No one really believed him, it was difficult to believe that the rushing wave of fire, spreading towards them was in fact not there but the four teens obeyed Harry. They did trust him, hence they were here risking their lives to help him.

Hermione grabbed onto Ron for support as her weak knees were threatening to buckle under her. Ron grabbed at her and both held each other close. Damien was too afraid to move and stood, plastered to the wall. Ginny instinctively reached out and grabbed a hold of Harry’s hand. She felt relief wash over her as Harry tightened the grip on her hand, reassuring her that she was safe.

“Trust me” he whispered to her.

Ginny could only nod her head and closed her eyes. The heat was starting to make them feel dizzy. Sweat was trickling down their faces. Still, no one moved. They stood holding onto each other. Harry held onto Ginny and felt her bury her face into his chest.

The wave came belting towards them, spitting fire around them. The heat was really becoming unbearable. Just before the wave crashed down over them it suddenly changed to a wisp of red smoke. It died down before touching anyone. The heat was gone and everyone felt the cold air wash over them. Ron and Hermione were looking like they didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. Damien had just collapsed onto the ground in sheer relief.

Ginny however was still buried deep into Harry's chest and had to be pulled away. She opened her big brown eyes and looked at Harry before looking around her. She saw no sign of any fire, or lava or any type of threat. She looked back into Harry's shining eyes and felt like she could kiss him right now, if only she could gather the courage. Harry had pulled her away from him, but continued to smile at her.

"Told you guys, it wasn't real" he laughed as he helped Damien up from the ground.

"But, we could feel the heat and what about the sound of it rushing at us" Ron said at once, trying to get his legs to work.

"It's all in your mind. Your fear will make it real. If you tried to run from it, it would only make it reach you faster. If you stand the ground, it won't harm you since you're not afraid of it. It's one of Voldemort's favourite spells, to invoke fear and use it against others." Harry explained as they made their way forward.

"No one said we were not afraid of it. We just did what you said since we trust you" Ron said, still shaking in terror.

Harry didn't reply but blushed a little at this. He continued walking forward. There was a small opening that led to a circular room. It was an enormous room but there was only one object lying in the middle of the floor.

Damien sucked in his breath as he saw the small black book lying, rather abandoned looking, in the middle of the ground. Harry motioned for them to stay at the entrance of the room.

Harry walked over to the diary and knelt down next to it. He ran his hand over the diary to see what spells were in place to stop the book from being lifted. He was rather surprised to find that there were no spells put in place. He reached down and lifted the book. It came easily into his hand and Harry felt his scar prickle with pain. He lifted the book and stood still for a moment. The lack of any spells stopping him from taking the Horcrux was making Harry feel uneasy. There were so many other spells put in place, surely there would be one at this point as well.

Chapter Fifty Two

There must have been around forty, maybe fifty Death Eaters surrounding the five teens. Harry felt like the air around him had vanished. He struggled to breathe due to the panic he felt. It would have been near enough impossible to fight all of these men alone, but with the added complication of the four teens with him, Harry didn't know how he was going to survive this and help the others to survive as well.

He felt the four teens huddle closer to him, they all had their wands out, but Harry was sure that they wouldn't know the first thing about fighting Death Eaters. The men in front of him were all wearing their masks but one of them stood out clearly. The long silver blond hair was always such a give away. Harry felt his heart leap in anger as he saw Lucius Malfoy step towards them.

"Looks like your luck has finally run out, Harry." He said at him.

Harry gripped his wand tightly and surveyed the men in front of him. He was trying desperately to think of a way he could escape with the four teens with him.

"Luck doesn't have anything to do with this. I'm just better than the rest of you" Harry mocked. He knew that angry Death Eaters equalled to clumsy Death Eaters. All it took was one nasty comment and most of them would lose their composure.

Malfoy gestured to the rest and at once the circle around Harry started getting smaller. The Death Eaters were closing in. their wands were pointed at the five teens and the closer they got the more difficult it would be to escape.

'Here goes nothing' Harry thought to himself as he got ready to duel. He hoped that the four teens managed to keep up with him. There really wasn't any other option.

As soon as one Death Eater got close enough Harry threw an acid spurt spell at him, the Death Eater at once dropped his wand and grabbed at his face and started howling in pain. Harry threw up his shield, putting every bit of strength he had into holding it up as the

shower of curses fell onto him and the others. Since they were all huddled together, the shimmering bubble protected all five of them. All fifty men were hitting the shield again and again, trying to break through it. Harry felt his shield shudder under the strain. It had never been used to deal with so many curses. Harry knew that the shield wouldn't be able to take much more. He shouted instructions over the thunder of the curses.

"The shield's going to break! Once it does start firing spells at them. I don't care which ones! Aim for their heads if you can! Stay together and summon your energy! We need the shields now more than ever!" Harry finished saying, just as the shimmering blue bubble began to crack and break away.

As soon as Harry's shield broke, the four teens sprung into action. Ron and Hermione had already started summoning the energy to bring up their shields while Damien and Ginny threw the strongest 'Stupefy' spells they could. The yellow and pink bubbles merged together, protecting the four teens. Harry had already moved away to start duelling. All of them were moving at an incredible speed to take shelter in the dark woods. Harry wasted no time and was firing the darkest spells he could at the men. He struck down three Death Eaters with the killing curse in an instant. Harry never used the Unforgivables other than when he was instructed to do so by Voldemort, the only time he had used an Unforgivable without getting Voldemort's permission first was when he cast the Cruciatus curse on Sirius, the time he had attacked the Hogwarts Express.

Harry hated using the Unforgivables. Unlike the rest of the Death Eaters, Harry took no pleasure in casting the torture curse or the killing curse. It used to be merely an order for him. He would cast whatever curse he was instructed to do so at Voldemort's command. However, today Harry was firing the spells vigorously not to take life but to protect it. He felt nothing as he cast the curses other than an overwhelming desire to get himself and his friends out of here alive. Harry would realise later on that this was the first time he had registered them as his friends. He would always protect Damien, no doubts about it, but the others were usually just in the way. But now, Harry wanted to get all of them out of here alive and well, not

because of any other reason but because he couldn't bear to think about any of them getting hurt.

Harry threw himself to the ground as another body binding spell came at him. Harry was being aimed with 'stupefy' and body binding curses only. It seemed the killing curses were being used only on the four teens, who miraculously managed to avoid getting hit by it. Ron and Hermione's full body shield had not managed to keep the multitude of spells away. It had cracked and broken, like Harry's had. So they had no other choice but to throw themselves out of the path of the killing curse. Harry spun around after sending another killing curse at a tall Death Eater and saw something that made his heart jump into his mouth. Damien had just stepped in front of the other three as four Death Eaters aimed Crucio's at them. Before Harry could react, Damien had thrown himself into the path of the spells. Before Harry's eyes the four spells zoomed towards Damien's chest but never hit him. They simply dissolved into the air a mere inch or so away from him. At once the four Death Eaters were thrown to the ground by Ron, Hermione and Ginny's spells. Harry realised that the Layhoo Jisteen was responsible for saving Damien but Harry was unsure whether the unique stone would protect him from the killing curse. Harry was certain that the stone would not be able to protect him from the ultimate dark curse.

Harry took a quick survey of the body count around him. He must have killed around fifteen Death Eaters. Their bodies lay sprawled on the ground. The four teens had managed to take out ten Death Eaters amongst themselves. Harry knew that they were only stunned, since none of them would have been able to cast the killing curse.

Harry ran after the four teens as they plunged into the dark woods, running and aiming spells at the Death Eaters that were chasing them. They did what Harry had said and aimed for their heads. Harry was racing through the dense woods after them as fast as he could manage.

Just before Harry got within reach of them he felt a spell zoom by him and explode in front of him, fire erupted all around him, encircling Harry, so that he was cut off from the rest. The four teens stopped in

their tracks at the sound and made to move towards him, wands raised to extinguish the fire.

“NO! Just go from here!” Harry yelled at them.

The four teens looked terrified to leave Harry alone. They backed away and looked around helplessly to find some way to help him. Harry yelled at them to leave again and saw Ron and Hermione pulling the reluctant and struggling forms of Damien and Ginny away from the flames and further away from Harry.

Harry turned around to see that he was trapped. There were at least twenty five Death Eaters standing in front of him while the fire blocked him from behind. Harry stood, ready to take out anyone who approached him. The men stood still, no one moved to get to him. Harry watched with a thumping heart as a blond haired Death Eater walked in front of the others and stood facing Harry. He reached over and removed his mask. Harry already knew it was Lucius Malfoy. His grey eyes were burning with anger as he stood, wand pointing at Harry.

“Never thought it would come to this” he almost whispered.

With a jolt Harry realised that there was another emotion, hidden deep within Malfoy’s eyes. It was regret. Harry knew that Malfoy had been affected by Harry leaving Voldemort’s side. He was undoubtedly given punishments for firstly being indirectly responsible for leading Harry to Wormtail. He had then failed to capture him for so long now. Harry understood the anger Malfoy must feel towards him. What Harry was not prepared to accept was that Malfoy senior had ever felt compassion for him. As far as Harry was concerned, everything that came out of his mouth or Voldemort’s was a lie. They were mere tricks used to betray him and use him as a weapon in this war. Harry gripped his wand more tightly as he felt the familiar rage burn inside him.

“There is nowhere left to go now. If you resist you’ll only be making things more difficult for yourself.” Malfoy continued to say as he took a tentative step towards Harry.

Harry took a step away and felt the heat of the flames behind him intensify.

“Don’t make me hurt you, Harry” Malfoy said in a low voice that again unsettled Harry.

“You can’t hurt me anymore than you already have.” Harry whispered back, hearing the sound of his own blood pounding in his ears.

Malfoy seemed to be taken aback at the statement. He looked uncomfortable for a moment before making his face expressionless.

“Have it your way” he said and signalled to the other men.

Every single one of them threw a curse at him. Harry threw up his shield that repelled them. But the force of the twenty five curses slammed into him and made Harry stumble and fall to the ground. His shield faltered as Harry hit the ground and two stinging hexes fought their way through and hit Harry, one in the chest and the other on his hand.

Harry gasped at the pain but got to his feet at once. He threw another acid spurt curse but it missed the Death Eaters. Harry stumbled as his shield was hit with another blast of curses. Again Harry lost control and his shield faltered allowing another curse to hit him. He felt a searing pain take hold of him as someone had sent a bone breaking curse at him, obviously aiming for his wand holding arm, but it hit Harry in the ribs instead. With a hand placed over his broken ribs, Harry tried to bring up his shield as he heard ‘stupefy’ spells being aimed at him. Harry had to throw himself out of the way as his shield didn’t come up in time. Harry got to his feet but knew that it was no good. He was too exhausted to hold up the shield for much longer. They were tiring him out so that he could be captured. He was exhausted and sooner or later would be hit with the stupefy spell.

He stood glaring at the men that had their wands trained on him. A few were pointing at his face while most were aiming for his heart. Harry still had his shield around him, but the Death Eaters didn’t hit him with anything this time. They looked over at Malfoy as he walked towards Harry. Malfoy could see that Harry was beginning to lose the fight. He wouldn’t be able to keep up the shield for much longer.

“Had enough?” he asked as he pointed his wand at Harry through his shield.

In response to his question Harry reached into his robes and pulled out the black diary, fury and rage was coursing through him. If he was going to be captured and taken back, he was going to make sure he had succeeded in taking his revenge first. He wasn't going to fail when it was only the last Horcrux left.

Harry turned his fury filled eyes towards Malfoy, revelling in the fear that was held in his grey eyes as he stared at the diary.

“Fuck you” Harry hissed at Malfoy before turning his gaze onto the black diary.

All Harry had to do was remember Bella and the empty look in her eyes as Sirius had held her, and the burning rage overtook him. The black diary had burst into a ball of flames and turned to dust within a few seconds.

It seemed as if Malfoy had been the one who lost a fraction of his soul rather than Voldemort. His grey eyes widened with fear and shock. He let out a howl of rage as he sent a curse at Harry.

Harry pushed all the energy he had into strengthening his shield. Harry's shield protected him but again the tremendous blow of curses had Harry stumbling backwards. He only just managed not to fall into the flames behind him.

Just as Harry thought his shield was going to crack, since he didn't have the energy to keep on going, a sound filled the air around him and shook the ground. A few Death Eaters had to leap out of the way as something came crashing through the trees towards them. For a moment everyone forgot about Harry and capturing him. They stood gasping at the sight. A huge tree had crashed down towards them. It smashed to the ground, making a bridge through the fire. Harry could just make out Hermione and Ginny standing on the other side of the tree, wands pointing at the Death Eaters.

Harry wasted no time. He threw another acid spurt spell behind him so that no one could follow him across the bridge made from the

fallen tree. He raced as fast as he could to the other side. He didn't stop even a second. The four teens joined him and all of them raced away from the Death Eaters. They could feel spells zooming past them but they kept on running.

Harry knew that they were heading deeper into the woods. The deeper they went, the better chance they had at hiding. Harry didn't want to lead these enraged men towards the small muggle village.

Harry and the rest stopped next to a huge boulder and hid behind it. They listened hard for any sounds that might tell them if they were being followed or not. They all had to catch their breath. Harry looked at his hand and saw that the stinging hex had left a deep cut. He caught the others looking at him worriedly. He probably looked like he was feeling right now. The pain from his broken ribs was making him feel faint and his chest and hand throbbed with pain from the stinging curse.

"You okay?" Damien whispered.

Harry gave him a nod and gestured to keep quiet.

Harry groaned mentally when he heard Malfoy's voice shout instructions to the others. He looked at Ginny as she suppressed a shudder.

"Harry! I know you're here, since we placed anti-appartation wards before coming. You can't escape! Make it easier on yourself and come quietly!" Malfoy's words rang through the woods and Harry felt his heart thump louder in his chest.

"If you come quietly, we promise to give your *followers* a chance to escape. Surrender now!" he yelled and his words echoed loudly.

Harry saw Ron and Hermione catch his eye and desperately shake their heads, signalling for him not to listen to Malfoy. Harry wasn't planning on listening to him anyway but gave them a small smile. 'My followers, that's new' he thought to himself.

Harry peeked a look around the boulder and saw that Malfoy was wearing his mask again. There were still twenty five of them, looking

around desperately for him. Harry tried to get his exhausted mind to work. With the anti appartation wards, they couldn't escape. Harry was sure he would be able to take down the men if he could just separate them out into smaller groups, all he needed was some time.

"Okay, you guys stay here. I'm going to go finish this" Harry said, but was stopped by Damien.

"I'm coming with you" he said determinedly.

Harry didn't know why he bothered with Damien at times like this.

"What?" Harry asked, knowing that Damien was going to come up with the stupidest excuse.

"Your shield can't hep you against all of them. You've proved that already. The Layhoo Jisteen protects me and those around me. I can be your shield." Damien said at once.

Harry stared at him. 'Yep, definitely the stupidest thing I've heard' he thought to himself.

"Damy, if you think I'm going to use my younger brother as a human shield then you are even thicker than I thought!" Harry hissed at him.

"There's no other way, none of the curses work on me. I can help you take them out" Damien insisted as he gripped his wand tightly.

"You don't know that! The killing curse is probably going to override any protection the Layhoo Jisteen has! Stop making ridiculous plans and stay here, out of sight and out of the way" Harry said as he prepared to leave his hiding place.

"Harry, we're not letting you do this alone. We all came here prepared to help you fight. We're all coming with you" Ron said as he too gripped his wand closer to him.

"We're standing by you, Harry. Even it's the last thing we ever do!" Hermione added, keeping the emotional tears away.

Harry looked around all of them, feeling his own heart constrict painfully at their loyalty.

“All you guys have to do is bring up your shields and keep them there. Okay?”

The four teens nodded their heads. Ron and Hermione looked at each other and wordlessly held hands. Ginny and Damien crept next to them, focusing harder than ever to bring up the full body shield. Harry was in the middle, next to Hermione and Ginny.

“Now” Harry said and the five teens shot out from behind the boulder.

Harry started firing curses at the Death Eaters and felt a magical surge all around him as four full body shields went up instantly. The shimmering yellow and pink bubble merged with Ginny’s purple and Damien’s orange ones. The bubble that was created was strong enough to uphold the attack of the Death Eaters.

Since Harry didn’t have to conjure up a shield he was free to cast as many hexes and spells at the surrounding Death Eaters as he could. He started firing them, aiming at the men nearest to them.

Harry could tell that they wouldn’t dare use the killing curse, in case it hit Harry. Voldemort would surely want Harry to be killed by his own hands, after destroying all his Horcruxes. The Death Eaters tried to break through the strong shield but couldn’t weaken it.

“We’re doing it! Oh God we’re actually blocking all the curses!” Ginny shouted excitedly.

The four teens were beside themselves with joy at being able to conjure up something so powerful. Harry was glad too, but knew that the shield wouldn’t hold for much longer. It was taking too much energy from them.

“Get ready, it won’t hold much longer” Harry shouted just as the multicoloured bubble began to crack.

Harry had managed to take out another ten Death Eaters, leaving now only fifteen men to deal with. But by now these men were raging

mad. The five teens ducked as a jet of green light came flying towards them. Harry realised that they didn't care about risking Harry's life anymore. Their army of fifty Death Eaters being led by Lucius Malfoy had been thwarted terribly by a group of inexperienced teenagers, except for Harry of course.

They fired more killing curses as they knew that the full body shield couldn't protect them all against the Avada Kedavra. The teens gave up the shield and drew out their wands and duelled fiercely against the Death Eaters, leaping out of the way as the killing curses sped towards them. Harry tried to aim his own killing curses at as many Death Eaters as possible.

Suddenly another sound distracted the five teens. There were shouts being heard and the unmistakable sound of robes swishing in the air. On no! They called for back up!' Harry thought, panicking at the thought of another fifty Death Eaters turning up.

It wasn't Death Eaters though who came charging out from behind the trees. It was difficult to make out as the thick black smoke, coming from the burning woods, was obscuring the scene. Harry was distracted by another Death Eater and so didn't see the men charging towards them.

Damien was busy duelling fiercely with one Death Eater and had just knocked him out with a body binding spell when he heard a familiar voice.

"Damy!"

Damien turned around, pointing his wand at the person standing behind him. Damien felt his knees weaken and heart jump into his mouth with shock when he saw who it was standing before him.

"Dad!"

xx

James stood, staring wide eyed at the scene before him. His youngest son, his *thirteen* year old son who was supposed to be with muggles, safe and sound, was in the middle of a violent fight with

Death Eaters. He stared at the teen, with his muggle clothes, torn and muddy, looking at him with shock and fear written clearly on his face.

Before James could say anything, he saw a Death Eater take aim and fire the killing curse at Damien. James summoned Damien too him, knocking him out of the way. James threw a hex at the Death Eater and grabbed Damien before taking shelter behind a large boulder.

“Stay!” James barked at him. Damien wasn’t even thinking about disobeying him.

He watched numbly as his father ran to join the battle that was taking place. A piercing scream made Damien jump and look around and he saw Ron fall to the ground.

“Oh God! No!” Damien yelled as he saw Ron crumble to the ground, yelling in pain.

At once four Aurors were circling him, protecting him from the Death Eater that had sent a bone breaking spell at him. Ron clutched at his leg and howled in pain. At once the Aurors brought Ron, along with Hermione and Ginny to Damien. The four teens huddled together. Ron was taking short gasps but managed to stop crying out.

“Ron! Are you okay? Oh God!” Hermione cried out as she tried to comfort him.

“I’m f-fine” Ron managed to say before closing his eyes and taking a shuddering breath to calm down.

Harry saw Ron fall and was about to help him when he spotted the Aurors. Felling like the bottom of his stomach had dropped out, Harry dodged the spells aimed at him by the Aurors and tried to get behind some sort of shelter. It was then that Harry spotted his father, duelling with three Death Eaters. Harry looked around for signs of Damien and the others. He felt panicky about what was going to happen with them. The place was filled with Aurors, who had by now seen the four of them here with Harry. He couldn’t see them anywhere.

Pushing aside the nightmarish situation, Harry concentrated avoiding the curses being aimed at him by both the Death Eaters and the Aurors. After dodging the curses by the Aurors, Harry sent a stream of hexes at the Death Eaters.

Damien saw his father rush back towards him. He looked even angrier at noticing the other three teens around him. Without saying a word he took out an oval object from his robes and roughly pushed it into Damien's hands. Damien looked at the silver object that had *James Potter* written on it. Looking confusedly at him, Damien was about to speak when James cut him off.

"Just hold it tightly!" he said and instructed the other three teens to hold it as well. A few seconds later all four teens felt a pull just under their navel as they port keyed out of the woods and straight into the Ministry of Magic.

Harry saw the Aurors take over the remaining Death Eaters. He knew that he had to get out of here. He couldn't really fight anymore anyway. His ribs felt like they were on fire and he was struggling to hold onto his wand with his hand throbbing horribly.

He saw Malfoy signalling to the remaining Death Eaters, now only six or seven left, that the wards were lifted. They could apparate away. With a series of pops the Death Eaters began to disappear. Harry didn't hang around. After jumping out of the way of a body binding curse sent by an Auror, Harry also prepared to disappear. He managed to lock his eyes with his father seconds before he disappeared.

James met Harry's eyes only a second before he saw Harry disappearing away. James watched helplessly as Harry disappeared. He didn't even get a chance to see if Harry was okay.

The Death Eaters had also disappeared away before any of them could have been arrested, leaving only the dead ones behind. The Aurors swept the scene, making sure no one was alive in the midst of all the bodies. James hadn't waited though. He had left the scene and went back to the Ministry, praying hard that the four teens could explain what the hell they were doing here with Harry.

Chapter Fifty Three

“Would you like to repeat that Mr Potter, I’m not quite sure I understood you.”

Damien sighed and looked at the middle aged Auror staring back at him.

“Which part?” he asked rudely. He had already been through his explanation four times already.

“The whole thing” the Auror replied, not taking his eyes away from the young boy’s face.

Damien took another breath and repeated his story.

“Like I’ve already told you, Ron, Hermione, Ginny and I were walking through a park. You know in the muggle world. We were all staying at Hermione’s house and so decided to go out for some fresh air. But when we went out we were cornered and captured by Death Eaters. They forced us to apparate from there and took us to those horrible woods. They were going on about how they were going to kill us and leave our bodies in the woods for animals to find.” Damien stopped and pretended to take a shaky breath.

“They were just about to attack us when Harry came and saved us. But there were too many Death Eaters, Harry couldn’t fight all of them by himself so we were forced to help him. We did the best we could until you guys came along and saved us”

Damien finished and looked at the Auror sitting calmly in his chair. He seemed to be looking at Damien intently. Damien refused to look away. He knew that eye contact was the important thing here. If Damien looked away it could make the Auror think Damien was lying.

Damien prayed that Ron, Hermione and Ginny stuck to this story as well. They had come up with this story when they were hiding behind the boulder with an injured Ron. They only had a few minutes to come up with something. Damien looked back at the Auror, hoping he had bought the story.

“What I don’t seem to understand...” the Auror began to say and Damien felt his heart plunge into his stomach.

“...is why the Death Eaters would want to take you to a muggle village and kill you there. It’s not something that is common with the Death Eaters attacks. If they wanted to kill you, why not do it when they captured you. You said you were in the muggle world. They could have killed you there as well. It doesn’t make any sense that they would go through the trouble of abducting you when they were planning on killing you moments later anyway.”

Damien stared at the man. ‘Time to bring on the waterworks’ he thought to himself.

“Look, I don’t know why they did that. I-I can’t explain their...their way of thinking. I’m just glad that I didn’t die! If Harry, Harry hadn’t come on time...I shudder to think what could have happened to us!” As Damien said this he filled his hazel eyes with tears.

The Auror stared blankly at him. No reaction to the emotional boy sitting before him. Damien rubbed at his eyes and pretended that he was embarrassed by the tears.

“Sorry, it’s just that...I’m really shaken up by all this. I just want to go home and sleep”

The Auror seemed to soften at this. He got up and conjured a glass of water for him.

“Just relax. I need a few minutes. I’ll be back soon”

Damien nodded and took the glass of water. He watched the Auror leave the room. Damien hid his face in his arms, not wanting to let the people watching him see his face. He knew that the room was being observed. Sirius had told him a few times that the interview rooms could be observed. His heart hammered in his chest at the thought of his father watching him just now. He hoped everyone believed their story. As long as Mr and Mrs Granger weren’t involved in the questioning, it would be fine.

The door opened and Damien looked around to face whoever had entered. He shot out of his chair as he saw his three friends rush into the room. Hermione threw her arms around the younger boy and squeezed him tightly.

“Are you okay, Damy” she whispered.

Damien nodded his head. He hoped that the other three knew they were being watched and listened to right now. He hoped they didn't say anything about what really happened as that would give them all away. It seemed that the other three were cleverer than that as Hermione continued to speak.

“I just can't believe how close we all came to dying today. If Harry hadn't come and saved us I don't know what would have happened. We would all be dead right now.” Hermione put her head into her hands and began to cry softly.

Damien thought he was good at acting but he had to hand it to her. She was putting everything she had into her performance.

Ron came over and hugged her, whispering soothing words to her. Damien noticed that Ron was walking again. His leg must have been fixed by the Ministry healers.

“Ron, how's your leg?” Damien asked as he looked at his friend.

“Good as new” he smiled. He looked really exhausted though. Damien hugged Ginny and all four friends sat around the table.

No one spoke but just sat there quiet in their own thoughts. Damien knew that the reason the four friends were allowed to be together was so that they could slip up and say something that would catch them out. He felt really angry with the Ministry. ‘Harry's right. There no better than the Death Eaters. Making us all sit here like this. It's not far from torture!’ he thought angrily to himself. He lowered his head onto the table and closed his eyes.

He wondered if Harry was okay. He knew his brother had been injured but being Harry, he wouldn't say anything or show it. Damien

knew that he couldn't see Harry for a while now. The Ministry might keep an eye on them if they suspected anything.

The door opened again and this time Damien felt his heart leap right into his mouth. Sirius and James walked into the room, followed by Mr Weasley and the four Aurors who had been questioning the teens.

Damien looked at his father, but it seemed that James wasn't looking at him.

"We've talked things over and I suppose there isn't much else left to ask you. All of you can go home. I hope you realise how lucky you all are though. Not many children can say they duelled with Death Eaters and lived to tell the tale" the Auror said looking at the teens. Damien couldn't help but notice the hint of admiration in his eyes.

"It wasn't really us that were fighting. Harry did most of the fighting. We just stayed out of the way" Ginny said in a small voice.

At once the four Aurors tensed a bit and looked at Ginny. Even Mr Weasley was looking uncomfortable.

"About that, I have one last question" the Auror that had been with Damien said. Damien groaned inwardly.

"How is it that he came to save you? It seems strange that he happened to know exactly where you were and that you were in trouble"

Damien realised that this was why the Aurors had kept all of them here and had questioned them again and again. They refused to believe that Harry had actually helped anyone. They would have believed them in a heartbeat if all of them had said that Harry had tried to kill them. But the fact that Harry had saved them, this was just implausible to them.

Damien felt hatred so strongly towards these men that he had to bite his tongue to stop himself hurling abuse at them. Why couldn't they just leave Harry alone?

"We don't know how he knew where we were" Damien heard Ron say.

"We didn't really get a chance to ask him. We're just eternally grateful that he did" Ron finished.

The Auror was looking at Ron, it was apparent by the look on his face that he didn't believe them that Harry had saved anyone. Hermione looked up at the Auror, a strange look in her eyes and she suddenly addressed one of them.

"Actually I remember something quite odd happen between Harry and the Death Eaters." She said looking thoughtful. She had drawn all of the Aurors attention to herself.

"I don't really understand it but, when Harry first came and stopped those men from hurting us, a strange conversation took place. One of the Death Eaters, I'm assuming he was leading the others, started shouting at Harry about something. He said something about Harry being a traitor and being responsible for destroying something...a ...a Horcrux, yes that's what it was. A Horcrux"

Damien was staring wide eyed at Hermione, as were Ron and Ginny. Slowly Ginny caught on.

"Oh yeah, I remember that as well. What the hell is a Horcrux?" she added.

"I don't know but they were pretty pissed at Harry. They kept on saying that Harry was going to pay for destroying them. But Harry didn't look scared at all. He pulled a black diary out of his robes and claimed that this was the last Horcrux. Before anyone could do anything, Harry destroyed it. That's when the fight really broke out!" Hermione finished.

Damien was staring at her in complete awe. The girl was a genius. She had given the Aurors evidence that Harry had destroyed all of the Horcruxes, without giving away the fact that they were all involved.

Damien looked at the Aurors, all of them had their mouths wide open and a look of genuine shock was on their faces. They asked Hermione if she was certain that's what she had heard. After Hermione repeated the story again, they looked at each with a mixture of excitement and shock.

“Well, you all can go now, if there is anything else you remember, please inform us right away!” one of the Aurors said as they hurried out of the room.

Mr Weasley embraced Ginny at once and wrapped a comforting arm around his son and led them from the room, whispering that Mrs Weasley was downstairs, in a right crying mess. Hermione was embraced by Sirius who told her that he was going to take her back to her parent’s house. As they left the room, Damien caught sight of his father. James hadn’t moved from the corner of the room. He was staring at Damien, the anger lurking in his eyes. Slowly James moved towards the door, he left the room without saying a single word to his son. Damien felt his heart sink. Everyone else had believed their account of the events but James hadn’t. His father didn’t believe him, not a single word.

xx

The journey back to Godric’s Hollow was the most uncomfortable that Damien had ever experienced. They sat in the car in complete silence. James still hadn’t said anything to him. Damien sat in the back seat, not wanting to say anything to his father. He didn’t know what he could say that would diffuse the whole situation. At last they arrived at Godric’s Hollow and Damien hurried behind his father to get inside the house.

James had never acted this way with Damien before. It was usually Lily who told Damien off for misbehaving and James would always laugh it off. The only other time Damien remembered his father looking so angry was the day he found out that Harry had come home and given Damien the Layhoo Jisteen. Damien shuddered at the memory. He had hoped he never got to see his dad so angry again.

James still hadn’t said anything to Damien and made his way to the living room. Damien followed him miserably. He came inside to see him mum pulling her head out of the fireplace. She had obviously been trying to floo call someone. At the sight of James and Damien walking into the room, she quickly pulled herself to her feet.

“Damien! Oh thank Merlin you’re okay!” she exclaimed and at once embraced her son tightly.

Damien didn't say anything but welcomed the warm embrace. The fact that Mr Weasley and Sirius had comforted the others and his own father had completely ignored him, was the most upsetting thing for Damien.

He looked at his mum with a warm smile as she looked over him intently to see if he was injured.

"Mum, I'm fine" he reassured her softly.

"I've been trying to see where you were for the last half hour. I was just speaking to Tonks at the Ministry, but she said you all had left a while ago" Lily explained as she hugged Damien once again.

"What happened? How on earth did you end up in the midst of Death Eaters?" she asked as she let go of her son.

Damien didn't say anything and looked at the still figure of his father. James had his back towards them and was in the process of removing his outdoor robes. When Damien didn't answer, Lily turned to her husband.

"James, what's wrong? What happened? Will someone tell me what happened?" she asked as she looked from her son to her husband.

Damien decided to confront his dad now. He had to explain things to him. He couldn't stand the silent treatment anymore.

"Dad..." Damien started but was cut off by James.

"Don't!" James had said this quietly but the word seemed to cut through Damien. The thirteen year old just stared at his father in shock.

"Don't call me that! It's obvious you don't think of me as your father. If you had you wouldn't have treated me like you this." James had turned around to face Damien and the look of hurt in his hazel eyes, disturbed Damien more than his words.

"James! What are you saying?" Lily said in disbelief.

“How can you talk to Damy like that?”

James whirled to face Lily, anger etched on his handsome face.

“I am saying what I feel. I have never been so hurt in all my life! I never thought my own son would lie to me!”

Damien stood still and let his fathers words cut at him from inside. He had never intended for his father to be hurt for anything.

“It’s nothing but sheer dumb luck that he got away today, Lily. He could have been facing many years in Azkaban for the stunt the pulled today, him and the rest of his friends!” James stopped talking and for the first time since coming from the Ministry, James made eye contact with Damien.

“I don’t know what you were thinking Damien, but you are so lucky the Ministry believed your story. Do you know what they would have done to you if they found out you were actually with Harry?” he asked angrily.

“Dad, I wasn’t...” again Damien was cut off by James.

“Before you tell me that you weren’t with Harry, explain something to me. Explain how it was possible that the Death Eaters managed to abduct you and forcefully take you away, while that pendant is still around your neck!”

Damien instantly reached for his Layhoo Jisteen. He had completely forgotten about that. Of course, no one at the Ministry knew about the protection the pendant offered to him. No one except for his dad. That’s why James had known instantly that Damien had been lying. He knew that while that pendant was around Damien’s neck, nothing harmful could happen to him. Death Eaters especially would be thrown away from him, before they even got a chance of attacking him.

Damien didn’t know what to say. He stood awkwardly in front of his parents, not daring to make eye contact with either of them. Lily was just staring at her son, mouth open with shock.

"I'm thankful that the Ministry believed you. Otherwise..." James stopped and took a steady breath. It was obvious that James was still recovering from the shock of what had happened. Damien had come very close to a sentence in Azkaban.

He looked at Damien and took a few steps towards him. Damien took a deep breath and made eye contact with him.

"I'm only going to ask you this once, Damien. Don't even think about lying to me" James said as he stood before him.

Damien could only nod his head miserably. He knew what James was going to ask him.

"You had planned to be with Harry today, hadn't you? You've been keeping in regular contact with him?"

Damien took a deep breath and looked at his father again. He knew it was useless to lie.

"Yes" he answered quietly. He didn't even dare look at his mum.

"How long has this been going on? When did you start meeting him?" James asked, his voice shook with suppressed rage.

Damien considered lying about this, but then changed his mind. If he was going to get in trouble he may as well come clean.

"Just over three months" he answered.

James didn't respond. He stood staring at Damien. He had of course realised that Damien had been in regular contact with Harry, but he never thought Damien would be in contact with Harry for as long as three months and not tell his parents.

James stood with his jaw clenched tight and his hands rolled into fists. All that time he had spent desperately looking for Harry, going to the muggle world looking for 'Alex'. Worrying about his safety and praying that he was well. Throughout all of that torment he and Lily were going through, Damien had secretly been meeting Harry. James could barely control the anger pulsing through him just now.

“Get out” James hissed at Damien.

Damien took a step back in shock.

“Dad?”

“Get out! Get Out, Damien, before I do something I’ll regret, get away from my sight!” James shouted at the frightened boy.

Lily was standing in front of Damien in an instant.

“James!” she looked shocked with his behaviour.

James didn’t say anything but walked around both of them and stormed out of the house, banging the front door so hard that it was left hanging from the hinges.

Damien was in tears. He had never seen this side to his father. He knew that no matter how angry his father was, he would never raise a hand to him, but the rage that was in his father’s eyes had scared him.

He looked at his mum. Lily was also shaking. Whether it was from anger or from shock from James’s reaction, Damien didn’t know.

“Mum” Damien managed to say through his silent sobs.

Lily turned to look at her son. She wanted to go over and hug him, but she too was outraged that Damien had hid such an important thing from them.

“I think you should go upstairs” she said with difficulty.

Damien felt like someone had slapped him hard. He stood gaping at his mum. After a moment he obeyed and silently went to his room. He only let his tears fall once he was in his room.

xx

The rest of the day wasn’t any better. James returned back home late at night and wasn’t in any mood to talk to Damien. That night was the first night that Damien heard his mum and dad argue.

The following day, Damien was only acknowledged by his mum. Although Lily was beyond furious with Damien as well, she couldn't treat him the way James had been. He refused to even look at the young boy. Damien tried to talk to his father but gave up when he got no response. He was about to bitterly tell his dad how much he resembled Harry when he was in a foul mood but decided it wasn't clever to rub salt on his wounds just now.

Damien spent the rest of the day in his room refusing to come down and have lunch. He desperately wanted to speak with Harry. If he could convince his brother to come home, everything would work out. His parents would forgive him then. Damien was half expecting Harry to turn up at their front door since now their mission was complete. Voldemort's immortality had been destroyed. There were no more Horcruxes left. According to Sirius, Harry had promised he would come home once he was finished. So, hopefully Harry was on his way home now.

Someone did come over to Godric's Hollow, but it wasn't Harry. Remus and Sirius had come to see how everyone was holding up after the whole Death Eater and Ministry thing. After being filled in by angry shouts, Remus spent the evening trying to calm down James with the help of Lily. Sirius had quietly made his way upstairs to see his youngest Godson.

After a few tears, Damien opened up and told Sirius everything.

"I only wanted to help him, Uncle Siri. I figured that if I told dad where Harry was, dad would force Harry to come home. Harry didn't want that. I knew that Harry would run away again and then we would never get a chance to help him! I only tried to help him. Why can't mum and dad understand that?" an emotional Damien asked as he was comforted by Sirius.

Sirius looked sympathetically at his 'pup'.

"You didn't do anything wrong by Harry. But you have to understand how your actions must have looked to James. You know how desperately James has been looking for Harry. You might not realise it but your dad has not been eating, sleeping or even relaxing in these past few months. Damy, you dad is suffering because every moment

he fears the worst for Harry. All he wants is his son safe. He won't let anyone hurt him if he can help it. You knew for the last three months where Harry was, had means of communicating with him but you kept that information to yourself. All the while, James and Lily were fighting with everyone and everything to find Harry. James feels betrayed by you. He thought that you would trust him enough to let him bring Harry home and keep him safe."

Damien opened his mouth to argue but Sirius held up a hand to quieten him

"I know that you didn't mean it. You would never hurt James. I know that and even he knows that. But he's really upset just now. He will calm down and then you can explain everything to him." Sirius comforted the distraught boy.

But James didn't calm down. The whole week went by and James still refused to look at or even acknowledge Damien. Lily had asked Damien if he had any way to communicate with Harry. With a hesitant look at his father, Damien had replied that Harry always contacted him. He never said anything about the mobile phone. He wanted to hold onto the phone in case Harry contacted him. Damien was getting more and more anxious that Harry hadn't come home yet and he hadn't even phoned or sent any type of message to say that he was okay.

xx

Ron, Hermione and Ginny listened sympathetically to Damien as he told them how horrible the last week had been. They were all sitting in Ron's room at the Burrow. There was an Order meeting happening downstairs, now that the news of Voldemort's Horcruxes being destroyed was out in the open.

Damien was glad he was brought along. He couldn't really stay home by himself so he was now sitting with his friends. Damien was eternally grateful that his parents hadn't involved the Weasleys or the Grangers in this whole mess. The Weasleys still thought that the teens had been abducted by the Death Eaters and that Harry had saved them. Mr and Mrs Granger still didn't know anything about the dangerous things their daughter was involved in. Damien figured that

his parents were too afraid that if the truth came out more people would find out and the Ministry would be involved again.

The four teens sat miserably as Damien finished.

“...and now he won’t even look at me. He hasn’t spoken to me since that first day. I just wish he would look at me, even a glare would be welcome.”

Hermione was instantly next to Damien and was embracing him softly.

“I’m sure he will calm down and forgive you. He can’t stay mad at you forever” she whispered soothingly to him.

Damien only shook his head.

“There’s something else bothering me. Harry hasn’t contacted me. I know he was hurt in the battle but I’m sure it wasn’t that bad. Now, I’m just wondering what happened to him. He hasn’t even sent me a message to ask if all of us are okay” Damien finished.

“I haven’t sent him a message or anything since I don’t know if he’s in hiding or what’s happened to him. I don’t want to risk anyone catching him because of it.” Damien added.

Before anyone could respond, Damien gave a startled jump and reached for his jeans pocket.

“Damy, what...?” Ginny started but stopped as she saw Damien pull out his mobile phone enthusiastically. He had jumped because of the sudden vibrations of the phone.

Damien quickly read the message and his hazel eyes widened with surprise.

“What! What does it say? Is he okay?” Hermione asked as Damien sat in silence, reading the message over again and again.

“Yeah, it’s just...I don’t know if this is right?” he looked puzzled and then walked to the small window peering out of it.

“What? What isn’t right” Ginny asked as she joined him at the window.

“It says that Harry’s waiting for us outside.” Damien told them.

xx

The four teens crept outside quietly, hoping that they weren’t caught by anyone. They quickly opened the back door and stepped out. According to the message Harry sent, he was waiting for them in the small room above the garage. The same room he had slowly recovered from the magic transfer and the attack by the Death Eaters.

The four teens held their wands in front of them. It seemed odd that Harry would come to the Burrow. Usually he would ask them to come and meet him in the muggle world. Damien was glad though. He didn’t think he would be able to slip out and meet Harry, not after the strict grounding he was under.

They opened the door to the small room cautiously. They let out a collective sigh of relief as they saw Harry sitting on the bed. He looked up at the four teens and their wands and smiled at them.

“At least you guys have learnt something” he said with a smile as he stood up.

Damien was the first one to race up to Harry. He threw his arms around his brother and clung onto him like he was a lifeline.

“What’s with all the hugs?” Harry joked as he pulled away from Damien.

Damien didn’t reply but just stood close to him. The others came inside the room and locked the door behind them. Harry looked like he had healed from all the injuries he had received. His face still looked a little thin, but otherwise he was okay.

After asking if everyone was okay they all sat on the two beds in the room. Harry listened to the story the four teens had told the Ministry. He gave an inward sigh as he realised that they were safe from the Ministry.

"You shouldn't have come here like this. Do you know there is an Order meeting happening in there? Dumbledore and all of the Order members are only a few metres away from you" Ron said worriedly.

Harry only gave them a smirk and replied.

"I know"

"You do?" Ginny spluttered out.

"Yeah, I figured it would be the best time to meet you guys. They won't have a clue you're missing"

Everyone just stared at him. Harry really did have a warped way of thinking.

"Okay, so what's happening now?" Ron asked, a hint of excitement was seeping into his voice.

"What do you mean?" Harry asked.

"Well, the Horcruxes are all finished. I mean there're all destroyed. Voldemort is now as mortal as everyone else." There was a wide grin on his face as he spoke.

"We did it! I mean, you did it. You destroyed them but all of us helped. Together we managed to finish all of them. What are you going to do next? Finish the Death Eaters? Whatever it is you're planning, I want to be a part of it" Ron said excitedly.

Harry smiled at him, despite himself. He was glad that everyone had survived the attack and that they all kept their word and didn't give him away.

"I haven't thought about what the future holds" Harry started to say quietly.

Damien interrupted him at once.

"I'll tell you. You have to come home and free me from the torment mum and dad is putting me through."

Harry looked mildly shocked at first. He sat quietly as Damien ran through his account of what had happened when they came back from the Ministry. Harry was surprised that James had acted in such a way with Damien. It wasn't Damien's fault that Harry didn't come home.

"...so you see, until you come home, mum and dad are going to continue making my life as uncomfortable as possible." Damien finished miserably.

Harry didn't really know what to say. He turned to face Damien properly and put a comforting hand on his shoulder.

"I'm sure they will forgive you with time. They can't stay mad at you forever"

Damien felt like ice cold water had been poured over him. He sat and took in Harry's words. 'With time' what did that mean?

"What do you mean? You are coming home, right?" Damien asked feeling dread creep into him.

Harry looked at Damien with regret. He seemed to be fighting just to look at Damien in the eyes.

"Damy, you know that things will get worse if I come home. It's not as simple as returning home and hoping that the Ministry or the Order won't notice."

Harry was speaking but Damien could hardly hear him over the roaring of blood in his ears. Harry wasn't coming home. He had never planned on returning to Godric's Hollow.

"But, but you promised Uncle Sirius that you would come home. You said that once you were finished you would return home" Damien said, fighting to control his emotions.

Harry looked sorrowfully over at him.

"Some promises are only made to be broken"

Damien seemed to lose the battle to control his emotions. He stood up, glaring at Harry.

"You can't do that! You can't just bring up someone's hopes and then crush them like that. You don't have any right to do that!"

Harry stayed quiet as Damien yelled at him. The other three looked uncomfortably away from the scene.

"Why did you come here anyway? Why did you bother to meet us here like this? Was it to...." Damien trailed off as he realised why Harry had come. Why Harry had taken such a risk to come to the Burrow while there was an Order meeting going on."

"You came to say goodbye" Damien whispered as the realisation hit home.

The look on Harry's face confirmed that he was right. This was the last time any of them were going to see Harry.

"You can't just leave like this! I won't let you. I didn't take all this shit from everyone just so that you can walk out on all of us again!" Damien screamed at Harry. Harry stood up as well and the soft look in his eyes had hardened.

"What are you going to do? Tell on me! Go ahead Damy, the entire Order is only a few steps away. Why don't you go inside and tell them I'm here"

Damien glared at Harry, wanting nothing more than to hit him.

"Maybe that's what I should have done. Maybe I should go in there right now and tell dad that you are here. Then he can drag you home by the hair if he has too. I won't care!" Damien was breathing hard and looked on the verge of tears.

"But if I was going to do that, I would have done it ages ago. I promised to myself that I wouldn't let anyone hurt you or make you do something you don't want to do. I just never thought that you didn't *want* to come home!" Damien yelled bitterly.

"I don't know what else to do!" Harry shouted back at Damien. Everyone in the room was silent, hardly breathing due to the tension.

"I don't know how I can make things any better. I know that if I go from here, everyone will be better off" Harry continued a little more gently.

Damien looked at Harry with hurt shining in his eyes. He refused to say anything to him.

"Look, we all got what we wanted. The Horcruxes are gone. We all finished them! It's over. We won" Harry tried to explain that his purpose was finished. He had to leave now.

Damien looked at his brother, tears glistening in his eyes.

"No, I lost. How can I have won if I lost you in the end? I didn't help you because I wanted to help defeat Voldemort. I helped you because I wanted you back in my life. The hope that maybe, someday, once everything was over, we all could be a family. If you go then I've lost, Voldemort won"

With that said, Damien walked to the door and walked away without responding to Harry's shouts.

The other three stood, lost in the tension. No one knew what to say. Harry looked heartbroken at Damien's departure. This wasn't how he wanted to say goodbye.

Harry looked uncomfortably at the rest.

"Look, I just wanted to say, that...I never really told you guys how much your help was appreciated. I wouldn't have been able to finish this so quickly if you guys hadn't been there, so...I just wanted to tell you that"

Hermione smiled at the awkward thanks they got.

"You're welcome, Harry" she said softly.

“We better go and see him” Ron gestured to the house. Harry only nodded.

Before leaving Hermione walked over to Harry and whispered.

“Before you leave, I think there is one more person you should say goodbye to properly.”

Harry’s eyes flitted over to the red haired girl standing next to the door. The unshed tears in her eyes hadn’t been missed by Harry. He nodded his head again at Hermione.

Ron and Hermione left quietly, saying goodbye and good luck to Harry. They didn’t look very happy about Harry leaving, but didn’t feel like they had any right to stop him either.

Ginny stood next to the door. She wanted to leave as well but somehow her legs weren’t responding to her. They stood firmly on the ground.

Harry walked over to her and closed the open door, facing the girl. Harry knew exactly how Ginny had felt about him. Damien had slipped many hints about her being ‘still madly in love’ with him. Harry had always disregarded these words. He wasn’t really bothered with how anyone felt about him back then. Harry always buried any feelings he had for Ginny. He had told himself that he had no future. He shouldn’t bring up someone’s hopes when there was no possible future for them.

Harry looked at the red haired girl before him, not really knowing what to say to her.

“I suppose you want to tell me I shouldn’t leave as well.” Harry said after a moments pause.

Ginny looked at Harry, a sad smile on her face.

“Would it make any difference to you?” she asked quietly.

Harry only looked at her, the answer in his emerald eyes.

“If you’ve made up your mind to leave, Harry. I won’t ask you to stay.”

Harry was surprised with her answer.

“Is that how you really feel?” he asked, not knowing why he wanted to know.

“It doesn’t matter what I feel. It doesn’t matter what I want. I’ve never asked you for anything, Harry. I don’t intend on asking you now” Ginny’s tears slipped out of eyes and trailed down her face. She didn’t wipe them away.

“Ginny. You know that my future is very unclear. I don’t even know how long I’m going to be here. I know how you feel and I just want to say that you shouldn’t waste your time. You have a future. I don’t. Don’t waste it” Harry said softly, resisting the urge to wipe away her tears.

Ginny smiled again and looked at Harry, deeply lost in his eyes.

“I’ve never asked you to return the feelings I have for you. So you can’t tell me not to love you, Harry. I don’t care about my future. The only future I care about, is yours”

Ginny walked away and pulled open the door to leave. She turned around to look at him, a smile playing across her face.

“You know Harry, if you had said that you don’t love me and that I should stop loving you. I might have listened to you. But the fact that you said we have no future together and you said it almost regrettably. That gave me the answer I so desperately wanted to know.”

Harry could only stare at her. She had managed to find out what Harry had tried to hide. Ginny locked eyes with him for the last time and whispered.

“I’ll never forget you, Harry”

Harry smiled as she walked out of the door. He stood in the empty room, trying to stop his heart from breaking.

Chapter Fifty Four

It took over one hour to finally calm Damien down. At first he was ready to go downstairs and tell his parents everything, but the other three knew that Damien was just angry and didn't really want to do that. He was just desperately looking for a way to make Harry stay.

When Lily came upstairs to tell Damien they were ready to go home, Damien managed to trudge out of the room with his head hanging low. Lily looked compassionately at her son, misreading his emotions thinking that he was upset because of his dad.

"He'll calm down, Damy. Just give him some space" she said as she wrapped an arm around the younger boy's shoulders and hugged him.

Damien didn't reply. He was caught up with what he should do. If he kept quiet now, they would all lose Harry, perhaps for forever. Damien saw his Dad standing next to the fireplace, ready to leave. There was only Mrs Weasley in the room. Everyone else had left. Damien decided that he was going to ignore what everyone else said and just tell his dad everything.

"Dad"

James looked around at him but didn't reply.

Before Damien could say anything though, the words that Ginny had said only a few minutes ago came back to him.

'Harry's lived his whole life as if he were in a cage. A very elaborate cage but it was a life of confinement nevertheless. Voldemort never let Harry live a proper life. If you really love him, Damy, you have to set him free. He won't be happy if you force him into doing anything. Let him go. It's what he wants. For once Harry should be able to do what he wants'

Damien's new found strength crumbled as he remembered her words. He knew that Ginny had as much of a reason to want Harry to stay as he did. But if she could let him go, Damien would have to try as well.

“Damy?” Lily asked as they were all waiting to see what Damien wanted to say.

Damien just shook his head to gesture that he didn’t have anything to say.

James went into the Fireplace to go home first. Then Damien would go and then Lily.

Just as the fireplace turned green and James vanished, Damien moved towards the fireplace. He passed the window and looked outside on instinct. He stopped just for a moment.

Harry was still outside. He watched Harry move out from the shadows, only slightly so that Damien could see him. Damien willed himself not to go running outside. Damien discreetly nodded his head towards Harry, eyes brimming with tears again. Harry raised his hand very slowly gesturing goodbye to him. Damien raised his hand as well and then ran it through his hair, to disguise his reluctant goodbye.

Damien was forced to move, as he couldn’t just stand next to the window. He saw Harry move away as he started to walk towards the fireplace. Harry disappeared into the shadows again just as Damien tore his eyes away from him. With his head bent low, Damien rushed into the fireplace. He could barely manage to speak due to the lump at the back of his throat. He caught a glance of his mum. She was looking at him with a worried expression. She knew there was something bothering him besides James behaviour towards him. Lily decided she would talk with him later and see what was going on.

Damien arrived at Godric’s Hollow and rushed to his room, locking the door behind him. He knew he would break down if anyone spoke to him tonight.

xx

Damien was back at the Burrow. It had now been two days since Harry had came to visit them. By now, Harry had probably left. James and Lily had to meet the Arthur and Molly and so had brought Damien along as well. Hermione had come over as soon as Damien had

arrived. The four friends sat in Ron's room, not really knowing what to say.

At long last Hermione brought up the subject.

"Has anyone heard anything more from him?" at this everyone shook their heads.

"He must be long gone by now" Ron said hesitantly.

Damien didn't say anything.

"Where do you suppose he went?" Hermione asked.

Damien has spent the last two days wondering where Harry had gone. He had been so mad at Harry he hadn't even thought about asking where Harry was going. Not the Harry would have told him in any case.

"Don't know, but I bet you anything he went with Draco Malfoy" Ginny answered.

"What makes you say that?" Ron asked.

"Well, that day we saw them together. Malfoy had said that Harry should consider his 'offer' and Harry had replied that once he was finished he might consider it. I think that Malfoy was asking Harry to leave with him. I can bet you anything that's what that conversation was about" Ginny finished.

Damien wondered about this. It was a possibility. Harry was best friends with the blond Slytherin. He probably went with him. The thought made Damien's blood run cold. Harry trusted that obnoxious, arrogant stuck up idiot more than his own family. *'But he's known him a lot longer than his family. Why shouldn't he trust him and be closer to him.'* a voice in his head told him. Damien shook his head to clear his thoughts and focused on the conversation happening before him.

The four friends continued to discuss the possibilities of where Harry might be. None of them heard the commotion happening downstairs and only realised something was wrong when someone came

bursting through Ron's door. Damien jumped along with the rest of them as the door smashed open and Fred and George stood before them, panting and breathing hard. They had obviously run the whole way upstairs.

"Fred? George? What are you guys doing here? When did you come over?" Ginny started to say but was cut off as the twins started babbling something. They were talking over each other and none of their words made any sense. They seemed to be excited over something.

"Whoa! Hold up. One at a time!" Ron shouted over the noise the twins were making.

"We just came from the shop! We had to come after the news! You guys have heard haven't you?" Fred asked with a curious look at the four teens.

"Heard what? What news are you going on about?" Hermione asked.

By the looks on the twin's faces, it must be big news.

"Blimey! Where have you been? It's been all over the news for the last two hours! They've caught him. The Ministry finally captured him!" Fred continued.

"Captured who?" Ginny asked, thinking the Ministry might have managed to catch Voldemort.

"The Dark Prince! Harry! They've caught Harry" George answered excitedly.

It was as if the air had vanished. Damien struggled to breathe as the words sunk in. Harry had been caught! He hadn't managed to get away in time. He was finally captured. Damien was vaguely aware of the shouts around him.

"WHAT! When? How did this happen?" Ron shouted.

"Don't know. We just heard the news ourselves. The entire Wizarding world is beside themselves with joy. They've been after him for what,

seven months or so? Finally got him now. In less than two hours he's getting the Kiss" Fred told them.

That seemed to make Damien snap out of his shock. He tore out of the room, stumbling at the stairs but managing to keep upright. 'They can't do this! They can't give him the Kiss! They just can't. This can't be happening' he thought as he ran down the stairs. His legs felt weak but Damien willed himself not to collapse.

He reached the Weasley's kitchen and saw, what could only be described as, pandemonium happening. Mr Weasley, Sirius and Remus all seemed to be shouting different things to each other. He saw an Auror, Kingsley Shacklebolt, trying to answer all the different questions. Mrs Weasley was standing next to Lily who seemed to be watching the whole scene unfold before her with a strange look on her face. Damien spotted his dad looking paler than he had ever seen him. He only caught a glimpse of him though as in the next second he tore from the kitchen to go to the Ministry. Sirius, Remus, Arthur and Kingsley ran outside to join James. They left the small kitchen and ran to the apparating spot. Mrs Weasley was trying to figure out what she should say to Lily, who Damien noticed wasn't crying or in a hysterical mess. This scared Damien more than seeing her having a breakdown.

Lily was still standing next to the door, staring at the spot James had been only seconds before. Her eyes had glazed over. She was in shock! Damien wished he had the energy to go over and comfort her, but Damien was the one who needed comforting right now. He felt the presence of his friends behind him. No one said anything to him though. Damien stood watching the scene unfold before him.

"It's over now, isn't it? They'll rest easy now. After they've destroyed my baby, everyone will rest easy" Lily said in an oddly calm voice.

Molly looked at Lily with fear and sympathy. She hugged her friend but Lily brushed her off.

"No, don't comfort me. No one can comfort me now"

“Lily, honey, it’s not over. Dumbledore is there at the Ministry. You know he won’t let them hurt Harry. He’ll figure a way out of this mess” Molly tried to reassure the distressed mother.

Lily turned around so her green eyes were focused on Molly.

“He’s not God. Dumbledore can’t save everyone. Especially not Harry. The Ministry have wanted to destroy him ever since he first came back to us. They won’t stop now. I’ll never see him again. They won’t even let me see him one last time!” with that Lily broke down and collapsed to the ground, with Molly hugging her and crying along with her. Molly was a mother as well and could only pray that she never had to go through what Lily was going through right now.

Damien collapsed next to the door as well and felt Hermione hugging him, hot tears falling on his neck. His mum was right. Now that the Ministry had Harry, they weren’t going to let him go. Harry was getting the Kiss in less than two hours. Damien felt his eyes burn with tears as he dissolved into sobs. His frazzled mind tried to think of what he could do to help his brother, but Damien knew that there was nothing anyone could do now to help Harry. Harry’s fate was sealed.

xx

(Three Hours earlier)

Harry let out a sigh as he paid the last of his money to the receptionist. He had made sure he had enough to last him a while, but ever since John and Fiona had left for the USA, Harry found he didn’t have the energy to go earning more money in the fight clubs.

Harry did regret that he didn’t get a chance to say goodbye to John and Fiona. He had gone to see them one night and saw that their trailer was taken over by someone else. The elderly man handed Harry a letter that was addressed to ‘Alex’. John had left it for him, explaining that he and his family were moving to the USA due to a contract he had received which was too good to turn down. In the letter John had said that they hated leaving like this, but since Alex hadn’t left any contact details they were forced to leave without saying a proper goodbye.

Harry was upset but glad as well. He was glad they had left this place and were now safely in hiding. Harry had never thought he would develop such a strong protectiveness over the former Longbottoms. He was undoubtedly protective of little Nigel. Harry knew that he was the reason he had disobeyed Voldemort for the first time. Harry didn't know what he would do if anything happened to Nigel. It was better this way. They would be happy living their lives away from Voldemort.

Harry stuck his hands into his pocket and made his way out into the sunny afternoon. He was due to meet Draco in just under one hour. Harry wandered down the road looking for the best spot to apparate. He was lost in his thoughts, thoughts about Damien, about Ginny and his parents. Harry would have liked to see his parents, just even one last time. But Harry knew that if he risked the chance to see them, he might get caught or get his parents into trouble. The last thing Harry wanted was to get his parents or Damien thrown into Azkaban for helping him.

Harry was so consumed in his thoughts that he never heard the footsteps following him. As Harry turned the corner to disappear into a dark alley, Harry felt something strike him at the back of his head. Harry threw his hands to his head and collapsed onto his knees. His vision blurred and he almost blacked out. Whatever it was that had struck him had nearly cracked his skull open!

Harry felt someone grab at his arm, Harry had his wand in his hand, ready to use when he felt a pull just under his navel. As he was pulled into the whirlwind of the portkey, Harry blacked out.

Harry was brought out of his unconsciousness by someone hissing 'enervate'. Groggily Harry opened his eyes. He moaned as his head throbbed with pain. He tried to reach out and hold his head but found that he couldn't move his arms. Harry forced his eyes open and saw that he was in a dark room. His hands were around his back and were obviously tied up. Harry felt the panic set in. He had been captured! His initial thought was that it was Death Eaters who had captured him. But he dismissed that when he realised that his scar was not erupting with pain. He turned his head slowly, as not to make his headache worse. He peered into the darkness, trying to figure out where he was.

“What’s the matter? Don’t you recognise this place?” a voice rang out, making Harry wince at the sound.

Harry tried to sit up, but found that he could hardly move, he had ropes binding, not only his hands, but his entire body.

Suddenly a figure stepped out in front of him. His wand lit up and seemed to travel to the corners of the room making the room light up. Harry had to look twice at the figure standing before him. From all the people he had been expecting, this was not someone he could have ever imagined.

“N-Neville?” Harry asked, as to be sure that it really was the chosen one looming over him.

Neville let a twisted smile spread over his face. He had changed so much since Harry had last seen him. It had been seven months but still, this Neville was completely different. Gone were the soft look in his eyes and the gentle note in his voice. He looked physically different as well. He seemed to have lost some weight, even though he was never fat to begin with. His chest was broader and he seemed a lot leaner. He seemed to be more confident as well. As he stood over Harry, his wand gripped tightly in his hand. Eyes full of cold fury.

Harry tried once again to free himself.

“Neville! You have to listen to me...” Harry started to say but was cut off as Neville hit Harry with a ‘silencio’ spell.

“No, Harry, today, you listen. I want to show you where you are”

As he said this, Neville flicked his wand and Harry’s bound form levitated so that he was standing upright, his feet were not touching the ground though.

Harry let out an inaudible gasp as the room came into better focus. Harry was standing in the ruined remains of the Longbottom’s home. His emerald eyes scanned the room. It was the living room, the same room that Harry had been in almost three years ago now. Harry looked at Neville and felt terror grip at him. Neville was staring at Harry with an almost hungry look. Harry understood the look perfectly.

It was hunger for revenge. Neville had purposely brought Harry here so that he could avenge his parent's death.

"This used to be my home. It was where I grew up. I had a perfect life before you came and decided to rip my family apart. You murdered my parents, right here, in their own home. Do you know what it must have felt like to be tortured and killed in you own home? In your sanctuary?"

Neville said this with the coldest tone Harry had ever heard. He wished he could free himself. He could explain everything to Neville. Not that he would believe him though. Harry couldn't even take Neville to see his parents since they weren't even in the country anymore.

Harry struggled against his bonds, if he could manage to free his hands, he could blast Neville away and make his escape. Harry knew that even with his wand available, he could never hurt Neville. He couldn't do that to John and Fiona. If Harry duelled with Neville he would end up killing him. Harry couldn't live with that.

"You probably never even thought twice about what you did!" Neville shouted as he waved his wand, making Harry slam hard against the wall. Harry fell to the ground in a heap.

Neville seemed a little surprised by his own actions. He didn't mean to hurt Harry while he was bound. That's not something Neville would do. He closed his eyes and forced his breathing out a little slower. He walked over to Harry and stood over him.

"Don't worry. I'm not a pathetic coward like you! I don't have to disarm someone before attacking them." With that said Neville waved his wand again and whispered 'finite incantantum'

Harry felt the ropes vanish and the 'silencio' spell was also lifted. Harry tried not to moan at the pain shooting through him. His back had hit the wall pretty hard. He saw a familiar wand being thrown before him. His wand.

Harry looked up at Neville. He picked up his wand and got to his feet.

“I’m not going to fight you, Neville” Harry said in a strained voice.

Harry wanted nothing more than to leave right now. He wouldn’t be responsible for Neville’s death.

Neville’s eyes lit up with anger at Harry’s words. He aimed his wand at Harry and hissed at him.

“Yes you will! I have spent the last three years waiting for a chance to avenge my parents! I’ve spent the last seven months, tracking you down. Now that I’ve found you, you won’t walk away from me”

“You can’t fight me, Neville. Trained Aurors couldn’t take me down. How are you going to manage it” Harry hoped he could scare Neville into walking away.

However Neville just smiled, an almost sad smile.

“I know what my chances are at survival. No one has ever survived a duel with you. But I would rather die in battle, avenging my parents than to sit back and watch you kill everyone around me!”

Harry never got a chance to deny that accusation. Neville had sent a ‘Reducto’ curse at him, which Harry only just managed to block. The force behind Neville’s curses was stronger than Harry would have imagined. The Duelling club at Hogwarts had definitely helped him in focusing his magical energy.

Harry dodged another three curses and managed to throw himself out of the room. He got up and tried to blast the door open but it wouldn’t budge. Harry figured that Neville had locked it in such a way that only he could open it. Harry didn’t have the time to figure out the lock and open it. He blocked another curse as Neville came into the hallway to join him.

Harry was finding it very difficult not to attack Neville. It was an instinct for Harry to defend himself. It was something he had grown up learning to do. He had to physically stop himself from sending curses towards the enraged boy.

Harry tried to block the forceful curses but they kept on raining down on him. Harry gasped in surprise as he saw Neville take out two wands. He was taking pointers from Harry. Harry was the only one who had ever used two wands in a Duel.

Harry felt a stinging curse make it through his shield and hit him in the side. He gasped at the pain and lost the hold on his temper. He fired a stinging curse without really thinking. It was the first curse Harry had used against Neville.

Neville was hit in the shoulder. He stumbled back and grabbed at his shoulder. Harry's eyes widened with shock. He had to get out of here before he lost the battle within him and it resulted in the boy's death.

Neville however had a triumphant look in his eyes. He smiled as he pulled his hand away and saw the crimson liquid seep down his robes.

"Now that's more like it" he whispered with a strange look on his face.

Harry tore up the unsteady stairs and tried to get away from the suicidal boy. He ran straight to the top floor and ran into one of the rooms. He tried to wrench open the windows so that he could jump out. The windows wouldn't budge. Harry threw two 'reducto' curses at it hoping to smash the windows. It still didn't work.

"It won't work, Harry. I've placed all sorts of charms on this house. The doors and windows are now unbreakable. You can't leave" Neville said.

Harry turned around to face him, panic gripping at him.

"Neville, look, I know how you're feeling right now. But you don't even know the whole truth! I didn't kill your parents..."

Harry never got a chance to finish as Neville blasted him from the room. Harry slammed against the window and landed on the floor as a heap.

"How dare you! I thought you had more balls than that! At least admit what you did you bastard!" Neville sent another curse at Harry but Harry rolled out of the way.

This was the last straw for Harry. He couldn't control his anger anymore. He stood up and threw another stinging curse at Neville. This time though, Neville blocked it and sent one at Harry.

Harry side stepped it and threw a body binding curse at him, hoping to stun the stupid boy so that he could leave. However, Neville was prepared and blocked the curse again.

Harry didn't really know how it happened but somehow they managed to reach the roof of the house. It was a flat open air roof which, like the rest of the house, was deteriorating. Harry fought off the many curses thrown his way and tried many times to stun Neville. But Neville kept on blocking the curses, making Harry lose patience. He could easily finish Neville off in two minutes, but his mind kept yelling at him not to kill him.

"Come on, Harry! You're the legendary Dark Prince! You can do more than 'Stupefy'. Duel with me!" Neville shouted as he sent another curse at him.

Harry wished he could throw down his wand and just knock Neville out with a good punch. He was really starting to lose his patience. Apparently so was Neville as he suddenly lunged at him and both boys went tumbling over the edge of the roof. Harry had dropped his wand in the surprise of being jumped at like that.

Harry managed to hold onto the side of the roof. He had a good grip on Neville as well and somehow, through instinct held onto him as well. Harry felt the sharp stone cut into his hand as he struggled against his own weight and Neville's.

Neville looked surprised that Harry was still holding onto him. Harry could feel the warm blood run down his arm as the sharp stone of the wall cut his hand open. Harry knew it was only seconds before both of them fell to the ground below.

He summoned the last bit of his energy and pulled on Neville so that he could lift him up. Neville struggled to get to safety as well. Soon both, Harry and Neville had managed to pull themselves over the side of the roof. Both boys collapsed onto the roof and lay there gasping and panting for air.

Neville had dropped his wand as well, but he didn't move to reach for it. He was still in shock that Harry had saved his life. Harry felt the unsteady roof tremble under him. The house had been through a lot in the last hour or so as the stray curses had hit the roof numerous times. Harry saw the cracks appear where they sat and only had a moment to react. He saw the cracks appear where Neville was sitting. Without thinking, Harry raised his hand and blasted Neville away from danger. Neville was taken by surprise and flew to the other side of the roof. Harry didn't have a chance to save himself though. The roof gave way, and Harry went crashing to the ground. He couldn't do anything to save himself. He didn't have his wand with him so he couldn't even conjure his shield to help save him.

Harry smashed to the ground and was buried under the heavy rubble of the roof. Neville scrambled to the huge hole in the roof and looked around for any sign of the emerald eyed boy. He couldn't see him anywhere.

Slowly and very painfully, Harry managed to pull himself out of the rubble. He crawled out and cried out in agony. Both his legs had broken in the fall. He could feel that his arm and wrist were broken as well. He gasped and struggled to breathe, indicating that a good few ribs had broken as well. He managed to pull himself free from the debris and just lay on the ground. He knew that he was not going to leave the ruined Longbottom's house now. He couldn't even crawl away from here. He lay there, blood trickling out from the cut on his head.

Just then Harry heard commotion downstairs and knew that someone had blasted the door open. He heard many footsteps rushing up the stairs. He tried to get up but there was no way he could move without causing himself pain. Harry saw a group of robed men appear in front of him. His breath hitched in his chest as he saw the eight men point their wands at him. The man at the forefront came closer and smirked at him.

"Well, well, what do we have here? It seems Christmas has come early, eh boys?"

Blake reached down and grabbed Harry by the hair and twisted his face up so that he could look at him properly. Harry winced but didn't let any sound escape him. Blake smiled at him again, showing him every one of his teeth.

He let go of Harry and flipped him so the he was on his stomach. He viciously twisted his arms behind him and started binding them. The screams ripped out of Harry as his broken arm and wrist were forced behind him. He couldn't do anything to stop Blake or protect himself.

"Come now, *Potter!* We have a few Dementors that are ever so desperate to meet you" Blake laughed as he pulled Harry up.

Harry couldn't stand due to his broken legs and was forced to throw his weight onto Blake.

Neville had just managed to stumble through the door as Harry was being dragged out. The Aurors looked at Neville and a few rushed to hep him. They saw the blood on his robes, coming from his shoulder and the huge bruise on his head, where he had hit the ground, once Harry had blasted him out of the way. Neville was looking at Harry and was not able to look away from the injured boy.

"Come with us Mr Longbottom" one of the Aurors said as they helped Neville out.

Neville let them lead him out as Harry was portkeyed with Blake to the Ministry.

xx

Harry woke up in a dark cell. His hands were still tied behind his back. He tried to move but found that there were chains attached to his handcuffs that led down to his shackled feet, forcing his legs to bend at the knees. Harry hissed in pain as his broken limbs throbbed in agony.

He lifted his head a little and tried to look around him. He was alone in his cell. He couldn't make out anything in the dark. He lay his head back down and tried to take a few deep breaths. Blake had just dumped him in here. He knew perfectly well that Harry was injured

but he kicked him in the ribs before telling him that he was going to be getting the Kiss soon and that there was no point in healing him.

Harry coughed painfully, bringing up more blood. He spat it out and tried to get his pain filled mind to focus. He was really in trouble now. There was nothing he could do to save himself. He couldn't even walk! Never mind try and escape from this place.

He resigned himself to his fate, he knew that one day he would get caught and the Kiss would be administered. Harry tried once again to move, to get into a more comfortable position, but he was forced to stop again as his movements caused nothing but agonising pain. Harry saw the cell door open and Blake entered, wearing another grin that spread ear to ear. Harry cursed as he was yanked up onto his knees by his hair again.

"I have a score to settle with you, Potter" Blake said quietly as he gripped Harry around the neck.

Harry struggled but couldn't free himself. He couldn't breathe as Blake tightened his grip on his neck. His vision started to grey around the edges and he struggled against the grip on him. Harry felt a curse hit him but didn't get a chance to react as he was plunged into the darkness of unconsciousness.

xx

James, Sirius, Arthur and Kingsley arrived outside the Ministry and rushed to get inside. James threw himself into the phone box and dialled the code to get access. Once prompted he shouted out his name, along with the others.

"I'm sorry. You don't have clearance to access. Please come back later" the voice echoed around the box.

James stood, confused. What did that mean?

Arthur suggested they all entered the Ministry individually. Arthur and Kingsley were admitted instantly. However, Sirius and James were not permitted to enter. They tried using their emergency portkey but that didn't work either.

“What the hell is going on!” shouted James as he threw his portkey down in rage.

‘I need to get inside and help Harry. Merlin knows what Harry was going through right now’ James thought in desperation.

James and Sirius tried again and again but failed to get entry. Arthur arrived back outside the phone box a grim look on his face.

“James, Sirius. You both can’t get in. You’ve been banned from the entering the Ministry building.”

James looked on the verge of a breakdown. He grabbed Arthur by the shoulders and yelled at him.

“Why the fuck have we been banned?” he yelled at the red haired man.

“You both can’t enter the Ministry until Harry gets the Kiss. The Minister has banned you from the premises since he’s afraid you might help Harry escape” Arthur told his friend sadly.

James and Sirius were speechless at this revelation. They wouldn’t be able to help Harry. They couldn’t even see him one last time. Both men charged towards the phone box. They were getting inside the building, one way or another.

XX

Harry woke up again, feeling his head throb painfully. He knew something was different the minute he opened his eyes. Instead of the cold hard floor, he was lying on a soft comfortable mattress. He was inside a pleasantly warm room instead of the cold damp cell.

Harry lifted his head and found he was tucked away comfortably in a huge four poster bed. Confused at the turn of events, Harry lifted himself to sit up in bed. He was surprised when his arms and legs didn’t object. The chains were gone and it seemed his broken limbs were all healed. His head still throbbed and he had to blink a few times to get rid of the black spots clouding his vision.

“Good, you’re up” a gruff voice sounded, making Harry jump. He didn’t know there was someone else in the room as well.

Harry stared at the man sitting a few feet away from him.

“Moody” Harry whispered.

“Glad you’re memory still intact, boy. Was afraid that you had everything knocked out of you” Moody grumbled and stood up, making his way towards Harry.

Harry flinched away a little. The last time he had seen Moody he had hexed him so badly, Moody was left in a comatose state for weeks. Harry wondered if Moody had helped him, just so that he could hurt him again.

Moody reached into his robes and pulled out a small bottle.

“Drink” he commanded.

Harry stared at the bottle and looked indignantly at him.

“Yeah, right” Harry hissed at him.

“Don’t make me force it down your throat, boy. You need all the energy you can muster” Moody hissed back at him.

Harry didn’t make any move to take the bottle from him. For all he knew it could be poison.

Moody sighed and threw the bottle onto the bed.

“When the effects of the last dose wear off, you’ll want it yourself” he said and stalked off towards his chair.

“Where am I?” Harry asked, ignoring the bottle.

“You’re still in the Ministry. You’re currently in my living quarters” Moody answered without looking at him.

“Why?” Harry asked, unable to stop himself.

“Would you rather still be with Blake? I can arrange that if you like” Moody yelled at him.

Harry opened his mouth to yell back at him, but then changed his mind. He sat back in the bed and looked around him. He was hurting all over. He wanted to sleep again, but knew he would never sleep with Moody in the room.

“Why am I here?” Harry asked again.

Moody looked up at Harry, a strange emotion flickered on his face.

“You were handed over to the care of Blake. Obviously that was a mistake. I walked in on him while he was in the cell with you. I saw what he was doing to you. No one is allowed to cast an unauthorised Cruicatus. Now you’re handed over to my care. I couldn’t leave you in that cell in the state you were in, so I brought you here” Moody seemed to be struggling with the answer.

“You brought me here? You healed me?” Harry asked, shocked at what he was hearing.

“Well, yeah” Moody answered, now definitely looking uneasy.

“But you hate me. Why would you help me? I thought you would be the one to...” Harry faltered not able to finish his words.

“To what? Be the one to hurt you?” Moody finished for him.

“Wouldn’t be the first time would it?” Harry said.

Moody got up and walked over to Harry. He sat on the edge of the bed, looking away from Harry.

“What is it you know about me?” he asked quietly.

Harry was thrown by the tone he was using. He didn’t think Moody could talk that gently.

“I don’t know anything about you” Harry answered honestly.

“I became an Auror at the age of nineteen. I didn’t get married or have a family of my own, for fear that they would be attacked. I had seen so much that I figured it wouldn’t be fair for me to endanger someone else’s life just because they were my family.”

Harry wondered why Moody was telling him all of this. He listened quietly anyway.

“Alice...Alice was like my daughter. She was very close to me. I even gave her away at her wedding. She was a good person and her death broke me. I felt that my family had been taken away when Frank and Alice were killed.”

Harry felt himself break into a cold sweat. He wasn’t expecting Alice or Frank to be mentioned. He forced his face into an expressionless mask. Moody turned around to look at him.

“The reason I was...rough with you was because I couldn’t get over what you...you had done to my daughter. I couldn’t look past that”

Harry felt dread creep inside him.

“Why are you being nice to me now then?” Harry asked in a strained voice.

Moody looked at him, his magical eye and his normal eye focused intently on him.

“Why don’t you tell me, Harry?”

Harry felt his heart shoot right into his mouth. Forcing the words to come out, Harry tried to fight the panic inside him.

“I don’t know” he whispered back.

Moody didn’t say anything but picked up the bottle and handed it to him.

“It’s only pain relief, you’re going to need it” he said and got up from the bed.

Harry took the bottle but didn't drink it. His heart continued to hammer at his insides. Moody couldn't have found out about the truth. He couldn't know what really happened with Frank and Alice, could he? No, no it was impossible. No one knew about that except for Harry.

Harry thought that since he was going to get the Kiss soon for all his crimes, Moody had decided to be nice to him. Since Harry was going to be punished anyway. Harry examined the potion in his hand. As he lifted it up he noticed the red fiery band around his wrist.

Harry smiled despite himself, another Bartra bracelet. 'Something's really don't change' Harry thought as he downed the potion in one gulp and settled back to let the potion work on him.

After a few minutes Harry spoke again.

"Moody, why am I still here. I mean I thought I would get the Kiss by now. What's going on?" Harry asked warily. It wasn't as if Harry was eager for the Kiss or anything like that. He just couldn't stand the waiting anymore.

Moody looked at him for a moment before answering.

"The order for the Kiss is cancelled"

Harry shot up in his bed.

"What! How, I mean how is that possible?" he asked with his stomach twisting in knots.

"Anything's possible when Albus Dumbledore is involved. He's managed to convince the Minister and the other members of the Wizengamot to give you a chance to have your say"

Harry felt his mouth go dry.

"Have my say? What does he expect me to say?" Harry asked, thinking how he could possibly explain all of his crimes.

Moody smiled again as he faced the worried teen.

Chapter Fifty Five

James wasn't going to give up. If he and Sirius couldn't go through the main entrance then he would have to find another way. He would dig his way into the Ministry if he had to. He wasn't going to leave Harry alone at a time like this.

Remus was also standing with them. He had left the Burrow at the same time but was instructed to go to the headquarters and gather the Order members by Kingsley. The more Order Aurors present in the Ministry the better the chance that Harry wasn't going to be mistreated. The Order members would be a lot nicer to Harry than the Ministry Aurors.

"James, are you sure about this?" Sirius asked as they stood before the blank stone wall where the door was hidden that would give them access to the tunnel leading into the Ministry.

"Stop asking me that!" James snapped at him.

"It's just, no one had ever tried to get entry from here." Sirius said as he looked at the blank stone wall.

"There's a first time for everything." James replied as he gripped his wand tightly.

"Ready?" James asked.

Simultaneously, James and Sirius turned into Padfoot and Prongs. The great big shaggy dog sniffed at the wall and moved towards his right, barking softly that he had found the entrance. The golden coloured stag joined him so that both were standing before the entrance.

Remus took a deep breath and uttered the curse to reveal the door. A black door appeared and Remus let out a deep breath. He walked over to it and knocked on it with his wand six times.

At once the door swung open to give entrance. This was the tricky part. If anyone trying to get unauthorised access set foot inside this room, spells would kick in to trap them and set off the alarms.

However, James had a theory that if they entered in their Animagus form, the alarms wouldn't go off. The reason behind this was that it wouldn't be the wizard's aura that would be detected but that of the animals. Sirius and Remus weren't too sure about this but they couldn't really argue with James when he was in such a state.

The shaggy black dog and the golden stag entered the room and waited for something to happen. Nothing happened. There was nothing to show that their entrance had caused any sort of disturbance.

Remus waited next to the door. He couldn't enter. He watched as the door closed softly and then melted into the stone wall, completely vanishing into the stone wall. He quickly made his way to the front of the building. He too was banned from the Ministry. He had to wait patiently to get inside.

Once inside the room, the two friends slowly and quietly made their way over to the small window that showed a steep slope leading down into the Ministry. Sirius gripped the metal bars of the window with his teeth and tore it away. Both threw themselves head first into the tunnel. They hadn't realised how steep the tunnel was. James tumbled out first, closely followed by Sirius. Once inside they changed back into their human forms.

Both Aurors stood up and waited, with thumping hearts to see if their presence had been detected. Surprisingly nothing seemed to be out of the ordinary.

"Come on." James whispered to Sirius and both men set off to find Harry.

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Harry opened the door and stepped out from the bathroom. He felt vaguely better, now that he had thrown up what little food was in his stomach. He gingerly made his way back to the bed. He sat on the edge, letting his head collapse into his hands. A trial! He was going to have a trial. What the hell was Dumbledore playing at? Harry knew that having a trial was only going to make things, if possible, worse. Half of the things Harry had done had never been brought to light.

Like saving Bella from the Ministry, for example. This trial was only going to bury Harry deeper into trouble.

He sighed and ran a hand through his messy locks. He was desperate for a shower right now, but he had to settle for the 'Scourgify' spell that Moody had used to take away the blood stains from his clothes.

Harry was still wearing his muggle clothes. He looked down at his black pants and black t shirt that had seen better days. He felt vaguely concerned that this would be the last thing he would be wearing. Harry shook his head to clear his thoughts. 'Don't break down! You won't be able to go through this if you think like that!' his mind yelled at him. But Harry didn't really know how else he was supposed to think? He couldn't possibly hope to get away from Azkaban. The best case scenario was a life sentence in Azkaban, with those Dementors. Another thing bothering Harry was that in Azkaban he would be helpless to protect himself from Voldemort. He would be a waiting target and would probably be handed over to him. Harry knew that the Dementors would give in to Voldemort sooner or later.

He was brought out of his thoughts as he sensed Moody standing over him. Harry looked up at him and saw the Auror looking at him with a dismal expression.

"Time to go." he said as quietly.

Harry felt his heart hammer against his Adams apple. He slowly stood up. They walked towards the door. Before Moody opened the door he turned to Harry and took something out of his robes.

"You have to wear these." he said awkwardly.

Harry looked at the chains in Moody's hands and looked at the Auror straight in the eyes.

"The Bartra bracelet's not enough?" Harry asked icily.

Without waiting for an answer Harry held out his bandaged wrists and waited for Moody to handcuff him. Moody did and seemed to be

doing everything mechanically. Harry felt heavy shackles being forced around his ankles. The chains running from his wrists to his ankles were surprisingly heavy.

Harry tried to take a step and found it to be quite difficult due to the weight of the chains weighing him down and the short chain running between his ankles. Harry glared at Moody as he opened the door and took hold of Harry's upper arm.

"Has to be done, boy." Moody said without looking at him.

Harry realised that Moody didn't have a choice in this. This was the way all criminals were brought to court. Harry tried his best to keep up with Moody, but the chains were too heavy for him to deal with and he kept tripping over his own feet. The shackles were digging into his ankles and if he tried to walk any faster, he ended up tripping. The short chain running between his shackled feet only allowed small steps to be taken.

"Moody...could you...slow down, will you!" Harry snapped as he tripped again, sending shockwaves of pain up his bruised back.

Moody did slow down, but not enough.

"We can't be late!" he grumbled as he held onto Harry tightly.

Harry was glad of Moody's tight grip, since he didn't think he would be able to move at all by himself. His whole body was aching and Harry could feel the strain his back was taking from the heavy chains.

They turned a corner and Harry groaned at the sight before him. There were Aurors everywhere. They all stood, crowded in this long corridor. Harry looked at Moody, hoping the Auror would shout out instructions to make some room, but Moody just headed towards them without any hesitation.

The Aurors stared at the bound form of Harry and most smirked at the sight. Harry felt his face burn with embarrassment and anger. Why were they making him go through all of this?

James rushed to the floor where the prison holding cells were located. He searched them frantically but had no luck in finding his son. His heart raced as he searched all the cells, his mind coming up with all sorts of horrible thoughts that could explain Harry's disappearance.

Sirius was not any calmer. He was rushing around, softly calling out Harry's name. The dark cells were mostly empty except for a few wizards.

"He's not here! Where else can he be?" James asked in a panicked voice.

"We've got to find someone from the Order. They might know." Sirius offered and both men set off at once.

They literally ran into Tonks.

"Hey, watch it! James? Sirius? What are you two doing here? You're not allowed in here!" Tonks said quickly as she pulled them into a corner.

"Tonks! Do you know where Harry is? He wasn't in any of the cells! Do you where they took him?" James asked, completely ignoring her questions.

"Well, yeah, but you guys don't have to worry about that. You should get yourselves out of here. If you're spotted you could get disciplinary action against you." she continued in a worried voice.

"I don't give a shit about disciplinary action! I want to know where my son is!" James roared, making Tonks wince.

"Harry's fine. Well, he is now. I mean he's as fine as one can be when in this type of situation." Tonks stuttered over her words.

"What do you mean? He's fine *now*! As in he wasn't fine before? Just tell me where he is. I need to see him!" James said with a note of pleading creeping into his voice.

Tonks looked uncomfortable as she spoke.

The doors to the elevator opened and the two figures stepped out. The courtroom that they were due to appear in was located at the far end. They both walked silently. Harry was sure he wasn't physically able to speak. His throat seemed to have constricted so tightly, he was sure he would have problems breathing, never mind talking.

This corridor was also crowded. However, these Aurors seemed to step aside and even though they were staring at Harry in those horrid chains, they didn't laugh or ridicule him. Harry idly wondered why. He didn't know that most of these Aurors were members of the Order. Harry kept his eyes focused on the ground before him.

He felt Moody stop abruptly. Wondering what was wrong, Harry looked up and felt his breath hitch in his chest. Standing before them and blocking their way was James Potter and Sirius Black.

Harry was rooted to the spot in sheer shock. He had been wondering where his father and Godfather were all this time, but he hadn't said anything. He had figured that they were not allowed to see him so he didn't expect to bump into them so suddenly. He couldn't look away from his father. He tried to look away but some invisible force held his gaze. James was looking at Harry as well, with barely suppressed tears. Harry felt a hot flush rise in him at the thought of how he must look in those chains.

Moody was the first to speak.

"Potter..."

"Moody, please. All I want is a few seconds to talk to Harry. Please!" James tore his gaze away from his son to look at his fellow Auror.

"We can't be late. You know that..." Moody started again but was cut off by Sirius.

"A few seconds isn't going to cause any harm! Come on, Moody."

Moody looked at Harry and then back at James. He inhaled deeply before giving him a nod. He let go of Harry and moved a few steps away. He was still near Harry, so there was no chance of any attempted escape.

James looked gratefully at him before looking back at Harry. He stepped closer to him and looked at Harry's pain filled emerald eyes.

Harry suddenly had the strongest urge to embrace his father. He felt ashamed but at the same time wanted nothing more than to hide in his father's arms. He knew that if it wasn't for these chains, he would have done so.

James looked at the chains wanting nothing more than to rip them away from Harry. He studied his son's face and at once saw the purple bruise on his cheek. With a trembling hand he touched Harry's cheek softly. Harry looked away not able to look at his father in the eyes.

"Harry..." James said quietly. His throat was tight with emotion. He wanted to say so many things to him, but he knew he had very little time. He remembered the words Dumbledore had spoken to him only moments ago. Brushing away the heart breaking emotions James spoke quickly to Harry.

"Harry, look I know you think there's not much point to this trial but...but just trust me okay. Whatever happens in there, whatever Dumbledore says and does, just agree with him. Okay! Please, Harry. Don't correct him or volunteer any information. Just go with whatever Dumbledore says." James said quickly.

"But..." Harry was cut off by James.

"Please, Harry! Just do this, for me, for Lily and Damien! Just agree with Dumbledore. No matter how wrong he is! Just agree with him. Don't fight him!" James begged.

Harry felt he had no other choice. He reluctantly nodded his head, feeling anxious over the bizarre orders his father was giving him.

Moody appeared instantly. He held onto Harry's arm again, albeit more gently now.

"Sorry, Potter, but we have to go now." he led Harry away without any hesitation. Harry looked behind him and saw that his dad and Godfather were being ushered out of the corridor by the other Aurors.

Feeling worse than ever Harry trudged along with Moody. They stopped before a set of black doors. Harry felt his heart hammer against his chest. He looked at the brass sign hanging over the doors.

'Courtroom 10'

Harry tried to slow down his breathing. This was it. His life was going to be over very soon. He looked nervously behind him. The corridor was now empty. There was just Moody and himself standing in the long corridor.

Without saying anything to him, Moody pushed open the doors and led Harry into the courtroom.

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Harry tried not to look around him. The large dungeon that they had entered was packed full with people. They were all seated along the numerous benches surrounding the entire dungeon. Harry heard the hush spread through the crowd as he entered. The sound of chains clinking and banging together, as he walked, seemed to echo around them. Harry saw the chair placed in the middle of the floor. He felt sick when he eyed the heavy chains dangling from the arms and legs of the chair.

Moody marched him up to the middle of the room. He waved his wand and at once the chains bounding Harry disappeared. Harry's relief was short lived as he was lowered into that horrid chair. Harry felt himself hold his breath as the chains sprang to life and wrapped themselves tightly over his arms and legs. They started at his wrists and travelled up to his elbows. The chains bound his legs to the legs of the chair, again starting at his ankles and travelling up to his knees.

The chains cut into his skin, aggravating the bruises on his arms and legs. Harry forced himself to show no pain, he clenched his teeth and tried to ignore the ache going through his bruised body. He couldn't really avoid the people sitting before him now, as he was forced to look at them. He saw a few familiar faces in the crowd. He recognised the red haired man as Arthur Weasley, Ron's dad. There was another red haired man who Harry assumed was one of Ron's brothers. There were many Order Aurors present, including Kingsley Shacklebolt and the pink haired Auror, Tonks.

Harry was surprised to see Sirius and Remus sitting among the Aurors. He didn't think they would be allowed to come to the trial. He then spotted his dad and sitting next to him, with tears shining in her eyes, was his mum. Harry looked away from her quickly. He couldn't deal with this. It was too much. They shouldn't have come. It was going to be awful for them to see him get the Kiss.

Harry looked around discreetly. He couldn't see Dumbledore anywhere. Harry felt his stomach flip as he noticed Neville sitting on the bench just above the front row. He was staring at Harry, his gaze never wavering. Harry looked at the three people sitting in the front row.

The Minister for Magic was sitting alongside a large, rather intimidating looking woman and a dark haired wizard whose names Harry didn't know.

The room was silent as the Minister cleared his throat.

"Now, that the accused is here. We are about to begin." He eyed Harry ruthlessly before speaking and Harry felt the familiar dislike build strongly inside him.

"Harry James Potter. You are brought before the Wizengamot today for crimes which you have committed against the Wizarding world. These crimes include the casting of the Unforgivables. You have committed a total of seventeen murders and have participated in numerous raids, resulting in more deaths and destruction. Do you deny these accusations?"

Harry looked at Fudge as he answered. His voice rang out clear and strong, for which Harry was grateful.

"No"

Fudge seemed to smirk as he continued with the hearing.

"The trial shall commence and acting as the Interrogators are myself, Cornelius Oswald Fudge, Minister for Magic, Amelia Susan Bones, Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement and Julian Reid,

Senior Undersecretary to the Minister. The witness of the defence is Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore.”

Harry looked behind him as he saw Dumbledore appear. He just seemed to appear out of thin air as the Minister said his name. Harry wondered how he had just appeared next to him. He was certain he couldn't have apparated into the building.

Harry felt every gaze directed at Dumbledore. The former Headmaster of Hogwarts however seemed to ignore everyone as he inclined his head as Fudge finished his introductions. Harry caught his father's eye and again saw James sending pleading looks at him. Harry still hated Dumbledore for his manipulating ways and his hunger to win this war. For Harry, Dumbledore was just as power hungry as Voldemort. They just happened to be on the opposite sides. However, Harry mentally told himself to listen to his father. All he had to do was keep his mouth shut. That couldn't be so hard, could it?

“I think that the first thing that should be explained is indeed this trial. The accused has verbally agreed to the charges placed on him. Why is it that you insisted a trial, Dumbledore?” Fudge asked with an unmistakable scowl on his face.

Dumbledore however looked like he either couldn't see the scowl or he didn't care. He walked a few steps over to where Harry was sitting.

“I think that the right for a fair trial is every wizard and witches right. Therefore Mr Potter should have this chance as well.”

Fudge seemed to swell with annoyance as he completely ignored Dumbledore's words.

“The first of the charges,” he read from a parchment before him.

“Harry James Potter, you have been charged with Seventeen counts of murder. How do you plead to these charges?” Fudge asked.

Harry waited for a few seconds. When it seemed clear that Dumbledore wasn't going to answer for him, Harry spoke in an emotionless voice.

“Guilty”

There was nothing else he could say. He had in fact committed these killings. He couldn't lie outright when he had no proof. The murmuring of the crowd surrounding him only made him feel more annoyed with the whole situation.

“Right, well, now that that's settled, we'll move on to the raids...” Fudge was cut off as Dumbledore moved forward.

“I don't think we have quite finished with the first charge.” he said in a calm voice.

Fudge looked at the two people sitting next to him.

“Yes we have, the accused has pleaded Guilty to these charges. What do you wish to add?” he asked in a controlled voice.

“Minister, you asked a simple question to which Mr Potter gave a very simple answer. However this case is more complicated...” Dumbledore was cut off as the Minister lost his patience.

“Complicated! There is nothing complicated about this! He has admitted to committing these murders! What are you trying to suggest, that he didn't do this?”

“Of course not. Mr Potter is indeed quite correct in answering Guilty to these crimes. My point is that these murders themselves should be investigated a little closely.” Dumbledore answered in his calm voice.

Harry felt sick as his pounding headache worsened and wished that the two men stopped playing games. He had answered the question. Why was Dumbledore arguing?

“The Wizengamot does not have the time to look closely at every single crime this boy had committed! We have to move on.” Fudge retorted.

“It would only take a moment or two to make my point, if you would answer one question, Minister?” Dumbledore answered.

“Ask your question!” he answered, thoroughly annoyed.

Dumbledore inclined his head and looked at the Minister calmly.

“Out of the seventeen murders, how many of the victims were Death Eaters?” he asked simply.

There was a hushed silence that fell over the room.

“What difference does that make?” asked a thoroughly annoyed Minister.

“It makes all the difference. Now, Minister how many of these victims were loyal followers of Voldemort?”

A sharp intake of breath was heard as most people gasped at the name. Harry managed to stop himself from rolling his eyes. They were all so pathetic, afraid of a name.

“I don’t have the necessary documents with me.” Fudge answered as he glared at Dumbledore.

“Of course, with this trial happening so fast it isn’t possible to gather all the information. I do apologise. However, you will forgive me if I present my first set of evidence.” Dumbledore held up his hand and at once a file appeared in his hand.

Opening the file, Dumbledore reported the findings.

“According to this extract taken from Mr Potter’s official criminal record, out of the seventeen victims, fifteen were Death Eaters.”

Harry was staring at Dumbledore, wondering what the point was to all of this.

“How does that change anything? They were still humans! This boy had no right to kill them!” Fudge snapped.

“Forgive me, Minister but according to this, you had given the orders for these very men to be killed upon capture.” Dumbledore held up

another document and it instantly disappeared and reappeared in front of the Minister.

Amelia Bones reached over and took the parchment and studied it closely. The parchment was a list of the fifteen Death Eaters and next to their names were the dates that the Minister had announced the order to kill them upon capture.

“As you can see from this, these Death Eaters were condemned to death by this very Ministry. They were men with atrocious crimes to their names. They were greatly feared by the wizarding community, hence your orders to kill them at sight. You had even agreed to give out rewards to any Auror who could take down these highly dangerous men.”

Fudge looked horrified.

“How...where did you get this information from?” he demanded.

“That is of no importance. The fact remains that these men, all fifteen of them were condemned to death by yourself. What I would like to point out is that on one hand you were quite content to have these men killed and even offered a reward to the Auror who managed to complete this task. On the other hand you are willing to punish the one who did in fact destroy these men. I was just wondering how you could justify that”

The look on Fudge's face was priceless. He was opening and closing his mouth like a fish out of water. He couldn't find any words to shout out. Amelia Bones took over.

“It is the job of an Auror to capture or in some cases kill anyone who poses a threat to our world. Mr Potter is not an Auror. He is not even of age yet. Therefore he can't be treated the same as an Auror. He didn't kill these men because they were at threat to the wizarding world. He killed hem for his own personal agenda.” She finished.

“You are quite right Madame Bones, however, Mr Potter may not have killed these men for the same reasons, but I think it is highly unjustified that one man gets rewarded for a deed that another gets punished for. These men were not a part of our society. They were

endangering our people. If Mr Potter got rid of them, for whatever reason, he still did the wizarding world a favour. He should not be punished for killing these Death Eaters”

Harry sat with his fists clenched tightly. He tried to block out the last few words Dumbledore said. What gave them the right to decide who should be punished for whose death? He kept repeating the words James had spoken to him. He had to keep his mouth shut, don't argue with Dumbledore.

Amelia Bones made a note on her parchment and after a few whispered words with Julian Reid and Fudge she addressed Dumbledore.

“The second charge against Mr Potter is participation in violent raids which disrupted peace and endangered lives. Mr Potter, how do you plead?”

Harry felt his mouth go dry. He had never participated in any raid. He always worked alone. The only time he was with other Death Eaters was when he went to the Longbottom's house and the attack on Hogwarts Express. He paused before answering.

“Not Guilty except for one occasion.” he answered clearly.

Fudge seemed to be still recovering from Dumbledore's words so Amelia Bones answered.

“Please explain yourself.” she simply ordered.

Harry didn't care if Dumbledore was going to say anything or not. He went ahead to explain.

“I have never participated in any raid that has happened. The only raid I was a part of was the Hogwarts Express incident.”

At the mention of Hogwarts Express, a ripple of shouts went through the crowd. Harry knew that many people present here had children who were probably on the express at the time of the raid.

“That is the only occasion you were involved in a raid?” Madame Bones asked.

“Yes” Harry answered.

She made another note and whispered something to Julian. The Undersecretary wrote something on his parchment as well. Harry wasn't sure if he was imagining it or not, but Madame Bones seemed to look at Harry with an almost gentle look. Her voice still boomed across the room when she spoke and her body was held very stiffly. She seemed very intimidating, yet whenever she looked at Harry, she had a soft look in her eyes. He was probably imagining it all.

“I wish to present my first witness to explain the situation at the Hogwarts Express.” Dumbledore said.

Madame Bones nodded her head and Dumbledore said in a clear voice.

“My first witness, please enter.”

Harry strained to look at the door to his left. He was wondering who would come before the Wizengamot to give evidence. Harry nearly cried out when he saw the dark haired boy appear at the door. He whipped around to look at his parents in horror. How could they let him do this?

Damien came inside, looking nervously around him. His eyes focused on Harry and he barely restrained himself from running over to him. Instead he walked over to the small stand that had been conjured by Dumbledore. Damien stood on the slightly raised platform and forced himself to look away from Harry.

“Please state your full name for the Wizengamot.” Dumbledore said gently.

“Damien Jack Potter.” came the reply.

“What can you tell you about the incident on the Hogwarts Express earlier this year?” Dumbledore asked.

Damien took a deep breath and launched into his story. He told them that Harry had sent a private message to him, he refused to say how, that he and all the other students were to remain on the train. He told the courtroom full of people that Harry had assured them that the attack was not meant for the students. As long as everyone remained on the train, none of them would get hurt.

"This is ludicrous!" erupted the Minister when Damien had finished.

"This...this boy is the accused brother! He's obviously going to try and save him! We can't take his word for it! He's underage!"

"I'm sure that Mr Damien Potter doesn't mind sharing his memory of the incident with us." Dumbledore answered.

Harry was having a nervous breakdown. Why was Dumbledore putting Damien through this? It wasn't fair for Damien to have his private memories broadcasted like this.

Fudge was still insisting that Damien was underage and couldn't give evidence to prove that Harry wanted to protect the students.

"He may be underage, but I'm not!" a voice rang out.

Harry looked up to see Sirius standing up. He walked down towards the platform that Damien was standing in. He stood next to Damien and gave the younger boy a reassuring smile.

"I was there at the Hogwarts Express and was injured in battle. At seeing me injured, Damien foolishly ran out from the train to try and help me. Harry saved Damien's life. He moved him out of the way of a killing curse. I remember him clearly telling the Death Eaters that he had instructed them to only stun any students that may come in their way. He escorted Damien back onto the train and even locked the door so that no student could leave."

Madame Bones once again took notes on her parchment while Fudge looked on the verge of bursting with anger. Harry was staring at Sirius. The dark haired Auror had failed to mention how he was injured in battle. That it was in fact Harry who had placed him under the Cruciatus curse after breaking his leg. He dropped his gaze from

Sirius and felt the pang of guilt surge through him. Why were all these people trying to help him when he had done nothing but cause them all pain?

Julian spoke up for the first time in the Hearing.

“While your testimony is appreciated, I’m afraid that we can’t accept it. You are related to the accused and according to Decree number four hundred and seventeen, any person related to the accused can not give testimony due to the likelihood of misinterpretation of events.”

Sirius opened his mouth to argue but was silenced by Dumbledore.

“If that is the case then I will have to present my second evidence piece. I was hoping not to use this but it seems we have no other choice.”

Dumbledore took out a vial with swirling white mist from his robes. Harry was eyeing it suspiciously. Whose memory was it that Dumbledore was about to show?

“For security reasons the person whose memory we are about to witness can not be named as it would endanger them. I have already had the memory tested to detect any forgery. Here is the report to say that it had not been tampered with.” with that, Dumbledore sent another report up to the front desk. Again Madame Bones picked it up, looked through it and then gave Dumbledore a nod so that he could go on.

Dumbledore dipped his wand into the white mist and pulled it out. He sent it flying towards the stone wall. At once it burst into a cloud of colours and slowly the picture cleared to show the Hogwarts Express stationed and surrounded by Death eaters. All of the men where hidden behind their white masks except for one. Harry could see himself standing just a few feet away from the train. As everyone watched, the image of Harry turned around to look at the Death eaters. His emerald eyes flashing dangerously.

“Remember my orders; no one goes into the train. If a student comes out of the train, you merely stun them, understand. If any of you kill a student, I will kill you in return.”

The memory faded away after these words. Harry was trying to remember who the Death Eaters were that were with him on that day. It was definitely a Death Eater who gave this memory as they were the only ones to hear his orders. He never got a chance to think about it as Dumbledore had proceeded with the trial.

“I trust that this should now settle this matter. Mr Potter may have been with the other Death Eaters that day and he did duel with the Aurors, but he also made sure that no student was injured. He actually kept the other Death Eaters away from the children. Without Mr Potter being there, the Death Eaters would certainly have attacked the train, killing the defenceless children trapped inside. Again, Mr Potter acted out of his accord, for his own reasons, but he helped the wizarding world nevertheless.”

Sirius and Damien both left the stand after that and Harry saw Damien sit down next to Sirius and Remus. Dumbledore continued to give evidence that Harry had in fact helped the wizarding world time and time again. He brought Poppy Pomfrey to the witness stand and let her explain how Harry had saved her two children from dying in the fire that the Death Eaters had started.

Harry saw the horrified expression overtake Poppy's features as she saw the Harry. He could tell from her expression that she wanted nothing more than to run over and embrace him. But like Damien, she too controlled herself and stood stiffly on the platform. After giving her testimony, she left and went to sit on the benches, near James and Lily.

Harry felt his head spin, he couldn't tell what Dumbledore was going to do next. He felt his heart leap out of his chest again as Dumbledore presented his third witness. The door opened and a red haired girl came inside. Harry closed his eyes and tried to take shaky breaths. What the hell was Ginny going here? Didn't they realise how much risk they were taking. If they got given Veritaserum to verify their testimonies, they would be in deep trouble. The truth about how they had helped Harry in the Horcruxes search could land all four teens in Azkaban.

Ginny stood defiantly, ignoring the sharp looks and gasps from her brother Percy. Her dad was looking at her with surprise, shock and worry. She didn't care though. She was going to do anything to help Harry. She told the shocked Wizengamot how Harry had saved her life from the Death Eaters that day the attack happened in Hogsmeade.

By the time Ginny sat down next to Damien and Remus, the entire room was buzzing with excited whispers. It turned out that the Dark Prince wasn't so dark after all.

Harry chanced a look at the Minister. His ears were a bright red and Harry was sure that there was steam coming out from his ears. He sat, clenching his teeth and looking at the notes before him, furiously. He seemed to have forgotten the other two Wizengamot officials sitting next to him. He kept on barking out harsh questions, which Dumbledore seemed to answer with ease and an eerie calmness.

"Regardless of the accidental kindness that the accused may have shown, he still has cast numerous Unforgivables. That itself is a life sentence in Azkaban. It can't be overlooked!" Fudge said, a triumphant look on his flustered face.

Harry looked at Dumbledore, despite himself he was curious as to how Dumbledore was going to talk his way out of this one. Harry was certain that no one would even notice if he was here or not. The furious battle was between Fudge and Dumbledore alone.

"The casting of the Unforgivables is a difficult subject, but again, Minister I would have to argue that the one rule should be for all. If your Aurors can cast unauthorised Unforgivables and be excused, then I can't see the justification for others to be punished."

Fudge was trying to speak, but no sound was coming from him. He took a few deep breaths and hissed at Dumbledore.

"How dare you accuse my Aurors of such a thing? I have never heard of such an occasion where my Aurors have carried out any unauthorised curses!"

“My apologies Minister, but if you give three drops of Vertiserum to each and every Auror sitting here, you will be surprised to how many admit to casting unauthorised Unforgivables.” Dumbledore answered. He swept the surrounding Aurors with his gaze and stopped purposefully on Blake, who seemed to squirm under Dumbledore’s stern look. Harry looked at him as well and had to push down his hatred for Blake. He had been hit with the Crucio curse but had thankfully passed out before suffering.

“And in any case...” Dumbledore continued.

“...you will see in Mr Potter’s personal file that he has never used an Unforgivables on any Auror in any duels that may have taken place. The killing curse that he has used, like I explained already, was for the Death Eaters that he killed.”

Harry looked directly at Sirius. He had used the Crucio curse on Sirius. Dumbledore was either lying to save Harry or he had not been notified by Sirius. His Godfather was looking at Harry with deep emotions shinning in his eyes. Sirius had kept quiet about what happened to him. He had been treated in hospital for his broken leg, but that was all. He never told anyone that he was hit with the Crucio curse. Only Damien knew what had happened between Harry and Sirius that day. Harry had to look away as guilt took a hold of him once more.

“So what is it that you are trying to suggest, Dumbledore?” Madame Bones asked in her loud voice.

“That Mr Potter here, is actually not a follower of the You-Know-Who? That he in fact is someone who tried to help others while he was known as the Dark Prince?” she finished with a quizzical look on her broad face.

“I am only trying to bring out the truth of Mr Potters actions. You may interpret it as you like.” Dumbledore answered, a twinkle reappearing in his eyes.

Harry had to bite down hard on his tongue to stop himself from screaming at Dumbledore. He was painting Harry as some sort of undercover spy, saviour of the wizarding world! Harry had helped

these people only because they were innocents. That was all that there was to it. He didn't want to be the bloody saviour of the world!

Fudge looked up from his parchment and looked at Dumbledore, a weird sort of smile covered his face, making Harry recoil in his chair.

"Okay, Dumbledore. You've put up a good show. You've tried to twist everything this boy has done to make him look good. But even you can't explain this crime. Fifteen victims were Death Eaters, I admit we can't punish Mr Potter for their deaths since we wanted them dead in the first place, I'll give you that. But explain the other two victims. The horrific torture and murder of Frank and Alice Longbottom!"

Harry felt his stomach twist in knots. He knew this was coming but he still couldn't prepare himself.

"Frank and Alice were not Death Eaters! They were good people who were tortured and brutally murdered in their on home by this boy! If nothing else, I think this crime should be enough to sentence him to the Kiss." Fudge ended. There was an uproar as many Aurors cheered at the Minister's words.

Harry couldn't help but look at Neville who was staring at Harry with hatred so pure it made Harry wish he could disappear. Harry's mind was in a panic. He had two choices here. If he told them the truth about Frank and Alice, he could save himself from the Kiss. He would probably still get a life sentence but he would be saved from the Kiss. The other choice was to stay quiet and not tell them anything.

Harry thought hard about what he would say to explain why he didn't kill the Longbottoms. How would he prove it? They would never believe in his memories. They would want proof and Harry couldn't give that to them, he had no idea where Frank and Alice were. They were in America that was all he knew. The other thing was that Harry still felt an overwhelming need to protect them. Harry could see Voldemort's spies sitting in the back benches, watching him closely. They would rush back to inform him. Then Voldemort would track down and kill the Longbottoms. Harry thought about Nigel. The child wasn't even two years old yet! No, Harry couldn't do that. He would not be responsible for the death of a child, especially not Nigel. He would have to keep his mouth shut. He was going to go to Azkaban in

any case. Maybe it was better he got the Kiss. That way Voldemort could never get to him again.

"I understand the severity of this charge, but I would also like to point out that till this day, the Longbottoms death has been somewhat of a mystery. I would like to question the only person who can provide any answers. Mr Harry Potter." Dumbledore looked at Harry who in turn was staring at him with a shocked expression.

"We don't need any answers! It's enough to know that he killed them. I don't think we need any details." Fudge retorted quickly.

"I think the details are very important. Frank and Alice were a part of our community. I think we have every right to know how they died." Dumbledore answered.

Reluctantly, Fudge waved his hand to gesture that he could question Harry. Dumbledore turned to look at Harry, his blue eyes boring into Harry's emerald ones. Harry tried to get his heart to stop thumping so hard.

"Mr Potter. Would you like to share the events that took place with the Frank and Alice Longbottom the night you and several other Death Eaters attacked their home?" he asked.

Harry looked at Dumbledore carefully before answering.

"No" he answered simply.

Dumbledore didn't look affected by Harry's abrupt answer.

"Mr Potter, either you can offer the answers yourself or we will have to administer Vertiserum." Julian spoke up from behind Dumbledore.

Harry ignored him. He had already accepted his fate. He was going to Azkaban. He was getting the Kiss. What was the point of all of this? Harry decided he had enough with this game.

"Mr Potter, the night you went to the Longbottoms residence. What intentions did you go with?" Dumbledore asked.

Harry looked up at the old wizard, hate filling him from inside.

"To kill them." Harry answered emotionlessly.

He caught the look on his father's face and tried to ignore the hurt that he saw.

"Which one did you kill first?"

The question threw Harry. He gasped at the question, a reaction which was echoed all around him as the withes and wizards looked at Dumbledore with shock. What a thing to ask?

"What?" Harry asked stunned.

"I asked, which one did you kill first?" Dumbledore asked again.

"I really don't think this sort of question is appropriate. We have a family member of the Longbottoms sitting here!" Fudge shouted as he gestured towards Neville.

"I assure you, Minister, the question is very appropriate. Mr Potter please answer my question." Dumbledore asked sternly this time.

"I...I, um..." Harry didn't know what to say. His numbed mind was trying frantically to decide.

"It isn't a hard question, Mr Potter. Which one did you kill first? Was it Frank or was it Alice!" Dumbledore asked, raising his voice for the first time during the trial.

Harry looked at Dumbledore, trying to figure out why he was asking such a question. When he saw Dumbledore about to open his mouth to ask him again, Harry just blurted out the first thing that came to his mind.

"ALICE! I...I killed Alice, first" Harry said, trying to get his hands to stop shaking. He knew that if he hadn't detected Nigel's presence, Alice would have been the first to be killed.

“Alice Longbottom. You killed Alice Longbottom and then what did you do? You proceeded to kill Frank Longbottom after you had killed his wife before his eyes. You killed both of them with the killing curse?” Dumbledore confirmed.

Harry felt weak and just wanted this whole thing to end.

“Yes” he answered tiredly.

Dumbledore stood up to his full height. He kept his eyes on Harry as he raised his wand and conjured another file. He opened it and started to read out loud.

“As we appeared at the scene, a horrifying sight greeted us. We could see the Longbottoms house being engulfed in flames that wouldn’t react to our extinguish spells. We knew that Frank Longbottom and his wife, Alice Longbottom were still inside as all of us could hear their anguished screams coming from inside.”

Dumbledore stopped reading and looked at Harry again. Harry felt like his heart had missed several beats. He stared at Dumbledore. ‘He tricked me!’ he thought to himself. His whole body was drenched in cold sweat as he realised that Dumbledore knew the truth about the Longbottoms, that Harry had not killed them.

“This is an extract of the eye witness report from the Aurors, when they reached the Longbottoms house that night.” Another flick and that report also was lying in front of the Minister.

Fudge however completely ignored the report. He was too busy staring at Harry. Every eye was now on the raven haired teen as he sat, chained to the chair, shaking with nerves.

“Would you care to explain how two people you had killed using the killing curse were still able to scream hours later?” Dumbledore asked as he leant towards Harry.

Harry bit his bottom lip, in an attempt to calm himself. He turned his emerald eyes towards Dumbledore. The fire that was present in those eyes had been replaced with a desperate plead.

“Please, don’t do this.” Harry whispered to Dumbledore. All of Harry’s attempts at keeping the Longbottoms safe would be ruined if Dumbledore revealed the truth.

“I have to, Harry.” Dumbledore whispered back.

“Would someone explain what is going on? What happened to the Longbottoms?” Fudge asked with his temper rising again.

Dumbledore stood up and looked at Harry, but the raven haired teen just shook his head and hung his head. He wasn’t going to tell them anything.

“I would like to present my last witnesses. The only ones who can explain this to you.” Dumbledore said he called out for his last witnesses to step forward.

Harry slowly looked at the door as it opened, praying hard that it wasn’t who he feared. He let out a strangled sob as Frank and Alice walked through the doors into the courtroom.

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The entire courtroom was silent. They all were staring hard at the two people who had been thought to be dead for the last three years or so, standing in front of them, wearing bemused expressions.

“It...it can’t be!” Fudge exclaimed all of a sudden. He pointed at the two people and started shouting out instructions to the Aurors to arrest them.

“Oh calm down, Minister! It’s really us. Don’t be so paranoid.” Frank shouted, shocking the Minister into sitting back down.

Even James, Sirius and Remus were staring hard at them. They knew that Frank and Alice were alive but were not expecting them to walk in on the trial. They were supposed to be abroad. That’s what Dumbledore had told them.

However, their reaction was nothing compared to Neville’s. The shocked boy sat looking at his supposed dead parents in stunned

silence. His brown eyes lingered at his mother's face for a moment before snapping to his father. They looked at him and smiled sadly.

Harry looked away from them, eyes closed, hoping all of this was a horrible dream. The Longbottoms had put themselves and Nigel in terrible danger. They were going to be hunted by Voldemort forever now.

The courtroom settled down after Frank and Alice were given Veritaserum to confirm their true identities. They stood on the platform, looking at Fudge as they re-told the story of how they managed to escape death. Alice looked over to the defeated looking boy, sitting in chains before explaining that it was her pregnancy that had saved them. That Harry wasn't able to hurt her or Frank because there was an innocent life relying on them.

The revelation that the Longbottoms have another child rippled through the shocked crowd and at once whispers and murmurs started. This was turning out to be one of the most memorable trials ever held.

Frank and Alice told the courtroom everything about their life as muggles, how the strange boy 'Alex' helped them raise money in the fight clubs, and came often to see them and generally became friends with them.

Dumbledore took over and explained that until recently, the Longbottoms were under powerful memory charms, so that was why they couldn't return back to the wizarding world. Dumbledore explained that he saw them by chance and told them the truth. After restoring their memory, they had to stay hidden until Harry was caught, otherwise it would pose a danger to their lives as well as Harry's.

Harry understood that the letter he got from John and Fiona was fake. They had never left to go to America. They had been taken away by Dumbledore. Harry kept his face down and clenched his fists together, not wanting to look at anyone anymore. He just wanted it all to end.

However, Dumbledore wasn't quite finished yet. Frank and Alice remained standing in the stands, as Dumbledore told the shocked Wizengamot that Harry was the reason Voldemort was now able to be defeated. The truth about the destroyed Horcruxes had reached the Ministry but was not released to public knowledge yet. The Ministry wanted to be absolutely sure before making such a statement.

Dumbledore didn't have to fight this as Hermione's comment about Harry destroying the Horcruxes was already being investigated. Dumbledore held up a large file that had confirmations that the six objects stolen had been destroyed as their magical essence could not be detected. Harry listened numbly as Dumbledore showed another memory of Harry destroying the Slytherin Pendant. Harry didn't even look at the memory, but heard his own voice as it shouted out, 'Tell him, I'm through! I'm not his puppet anymore'

He heard the sharp intake of breath and the gasps as everyone saw Harry's eyes turn black in the memory and the pendant being blasted into smithereens.

Dumbledore stood in the middle of the floor, sweeping the room with his blue eyes.

"I have shown you every piece of evidence I had, to show you the truth about this boy that sits before you. Yes, he committed murder, yes he stayed with Voldemort for the last fifteen years. But at the same time, this boy has saved many lives. He went against the people that brought him up to help the innocent. He risked his own life numerous times to help the innocent. A few people sitting in this room would not be here if it wasn't for him." He looked pointedly at Frank and Alice before looking at Ginny, Damien and Poppy Pomfrey.

"I have also tried to bring to light the recent struggle this boy has gone through. He has destroyed many of the Horcruxes that made Voldemort invincible. The Ministry had one Horcrux that it destroyed but Harry destroyed the rest." Harry snapped his head up at this. What Horcrux had the Ministry destroyed?

With a jolt, Harry realised that Dumbledore was referring to the Black family ring that Bella had. Dumbledore probably didn't inform anyone

that it went missing. Sirius had probably not told anyone that Harry had helped Bella, so that's why that charge wasn't mentioned. Dumbledore probably figured out that Harry had come to the Ministry to get Bella and the Horcrux. He had lied to the Ministry saying that he had destroyed the ring to save Harry.

"If today, Voldemort is brought down, it is only because of Mr Harry Potter. This war is now not far from being over and the peace that the wizarding world will get after the fall of Voldemort is all due to this boy."

Harry had to clench his teeth tight again to stop himself from saying anything. He was not the wizarding world's saviour! He didn't do this to save anyone. He did this to get revenge on Voldemort!

"I leave the decision to you." Dumbledore finished and went to stand next to Frank and Alice.

For the first few minutes there was silence. The three people sitting in the front row seemed to be deep in conversation. Harry wearily looked up, ready to accept the punishment for life sentence in Azkaban. Dumbledore had saved him from the Kiss that much Harry knew, but he was still going to spend the rest of this life in Azkaban.

At long last the three officials faced Harry. Fudge was looking very red in the face. He spoke in a loud voice.

"All those in favour of the life sentence in Azkaban for the accused."

Fudge raised his hand and looked around the courtroom. There were many hands in the air. Harry noticed Blake's hand shooting in the air at once. However, Madame Bones and Julian Reid didn't have their hands in the air. They sat silently as Fudge counted the hands in favour of sending Harry to Azkaban.

"All those in favour of clearing Mr Potter from all charges." Madame Bones said. Her hand along with Julian's raised into the air.

Harry's heart seemed to have stopped as he took in the raised hands. His parents, Damien, Ginny, his godfather and Remus had obviously shot their hands in the air but it seemed the majority of the Aurors

had raised their hands as well. Harry noticed that Neville had not raised his hand at either announcement.

Fudge looked around in horror. He didn't say anything as the number was totalled up. Madame Bones took over and stood up.

"Mr Potter. The verdict is clear. You have been cleared of all charges. You're free to go." she added with a small smile.

At once the chains binding him slid away from him with a bang. Harry stayed where he was though. He couldn't believe what he had just heard. Was that right? He was cleared of all charges! He didn't even hear the sound of rushing feet. He sat in his chair, taking deep breaths to clear his frazzled mind. He was free! He didn't have to run from anyone anymore.

Harry only realised what was happening when he felt two strong hands grab him around the arms and he was pulled fiercely from the chair. He felt himself being embraced tightly and Harry knew that it was his dad who had pulled him so enthusiastically from the chair. He could feel the tears fall on his neck as his father whispered comforting words in his ear.

Harry wrapped his arms around his father and hugged him as well for the first time in sixteen years. He was suddenly pulled out of his father's warm embrace and found himself being pulled into the embrace of his mum. For some reason this broke Harry. He let go of the weakening grip he had on his emotions and let his tears fall as his mum cried and hugged him and kissed him over and over again. Harry couldn't even talk, his throat was constricted with emotions.

He was finally released from his mum's embrace and found someone slamming into his chest. Harry groaned a little as his torso was covered in bruises. Damien was too engrossed in his own emotions to notice Harry's groan.

Harry didn't know how long he was standing there, surrounded by his parents and his brother. He noticed Sirius and Remus standing next to James, smiling at him, with tears in their eyes as well. It was clear that no one had expected this verdict. It was either the Kiss or life

Chapter Fifty Six

Ron and Hermione stood in the main reception hall of the Ministry, hardly talking. They had been waiting here for that last two hours now. They had arrived with Damien and Ginny, but Professor Dumbledore had not allowed them to come to the trial. They had refused to go back home until they found out what was to happen to Harry. So they settled for waiting in the main reception hall. They kept on getting sharp looks thrown their way by the Aurors. Ron just scowled at them while Hermione tried not to be so rude.

“How much longer do you reckon it will be?” Ron asked quietly.

“Don’t know” Hermione answered.

Both felt horrible for not being to help Harry. They had confessed everything to Professor Dumbledore, that they had helped Harry destroy the Horcruxes. They had been told that they couldn’t testify before the Wizengamot as this revelation may cause more problems.

Ron was too anxious to stay still and kept on pacing. Hermione restrained herself from saying anything to him. Finally she saw a steady stream of people approaching the hall, making their way to the exit. Both teens quickly strode forward to see if they could spot someone who would tell them what happened at the trial.

They saw many faces they didn’t recognise. Ron and Hermione stood awkwardly, trying to spot Damien or Ginny. Ron gasped and grabbed a hold of Hermione’s hand. Hermione turned to look at the direction he was staring at. She felt her mouth drop with shock and surprise. Neville was walking along with two people on either side of him. The two adults had their arms wrapped around his shoulders. Ron and Hermione stared hard at the two people. It was definitely Frank and Alice Longbottom. They watched in numb silence as the Longbottom family left the Ministry.

“What the hell...” Ron started to say but was cut off as he spotted his dad walking along with Percy and Ginny.

Hermione and Ron ran towards them. Hermione felt her heart leap as she locked eyes with Ginny who gave Hermione a big smile.

“Ginny! Ginny what happened?” both Ron and Hermione shouted at her in a mixture of excitement and nerves.

Ginny continued to smile but didn’t say anything. She turned around to look at someone coming behind her. Ron and Hermione followed her gaze and let out a gasp of relief.

They saw Harry walking along with a small group around him. Harry had his mum and dad’s arms wrapped around him, similar to Neville. Damien was walking along with him, a grin plastered over his tired face. Sirius and Remus were on either side of James and Lily. They all looked like they had been through hell and back.

Without waiting for them to come any nearer, Ron and Hermione dashed towards them. Harry looked up in time to see the bushy haired girl run towards him. He never got a chance to prepare himself as Hermione threw herself around him. Harry gasped a little as his battered and bruised body objected to the sudden embrace. Hermione pulled away from him and looked embarrassedly at him. She hadn’t meant to do that but the sight of him walking freely out of the Ministry just made Hermione act without really thinking.

“Sorry” she whispered to him.

Harry just smiled tiredly at her, not really blaming her. She didn’t know that Harry was so exhausted that he was fighting to just stay upright. Ron came to stand next to Hermione. He beamed at Harry and Harry could tell that he was very close to hugging him as well. Ron just settled for smiling at him, not really knowing what to say.

“Blimey Harry. I can’t believe they freed you! That’s bloody awesome” he said finally.

Harry looked at them but didn’t say anything.

James put his arm around Harry again. He could see that struggle Harry was going through. ‘He must be exhausted’ he thought to himself not really realising the extent of Harry’s injuries. He knew that Harry had been hurt but according to Tonks, she and Moody had healed him.

“Come on, we should get going” he said gently to them. Ron and Hermione quickly walked along with the rest of them. Ginny joined them as well.

Harry’s mind was still reeling from the shock of being cleared. He couldn’t believe that he was going to have a chance to live his life as a normal wizard now. He didn’t have to hide and live like a prisoner anymore. He would have a chance to get to know his parents and grow up with Damien.

He wasn’t paying attention to where he was going and only realised that they had approached the exit as a horrible pain shot through him. His arm throbbed as the jolt of electricity ripped through his arm and into his chest. Harry yelled out in pain and at once fell to his knees. His shaky legs had buckled under him as the pain shot through him. He tried to move away from the telephone box as the pain was gripping at his heart. James and Lily were trying to help him but Harry violently jerked away from them and pushed himself away from the threshold of the exit. Only once he was a few steps away from the telephone box did the pain diminish. Harry took shaky breaths to calm down and pulled his shaky hands away from his chest. He tried to blink away the tears that had sprung to his eyes. James and Lily along with the rest were kneeling next to Harry, looks of utter horror and shock etched on all their faces.

“Harry! Oh God, what happened?” Lily asked desperately.

Harry looked at her, through bloodshot eyes. He had completely forgotten about the Bartra bracelet. He couldn’t talk as his breathing was still harsh. He shakily lifted his hand to show them the Bartra bracelet that was around his wrist. At first the adults couldn’t understand what Harry was trying to say. Then Sirius noticed a very faint wisp of red light, half hidden in the bandages covering Harry’s wrist. He took a hold of Harry’s shaky hand and pulled at the bandage so that the Bartra bracelet was visible.

James let out an angry hiss at the sight and was on his feet in moments. He couldn’t believe his son had that horrid thing around him again. The four teens were looking confusedly at the red wisp of light. Then Damien remembered seeing it on Harry the day he had

saved them from the Daywalkers. He still didn't know what it was but knew that it caused pain to Harry.

"Harry, who put that on you?" Sirius asked, barely restraining his anger as well.

Harry looked at his godfather. He was feeling completely drained. He just wanted to close his eyes and sleep. With difficulty, Harry opened his mouth to speak.

"I-I don't know. I was unconscious at the time" he answered. He didn't really know the effect his words were going to have on the surrounding people.

Lily gasped as the three marauders seem to growl in anger. The four teens were just staring at Harry, looks of pain on their young faces.

"Come on, Harry. Up you get" Remus said as he helped Harry back to his shaky feet.

Harry swayed a little on the spot but managed to stay upright. The pain potion he had taken had worn off by now, and Harry was starting to feel the pain overwhelm him.

"I don't feel so good" he murmured as Remus helped Harry to sit on one of the chairs.

"No, I don't expect you do" Remus said as he settled the exhausted boy on the chair.

"I bet you it was Moody who put that on him!" Sirius barked in anger.

Damien, Ginny, Ron and Hermione sat next to Harry as the adults headed off to find Moody. Lily stayed next to Harry. She was just about to check him for his injuries when she saw Tonks running towards them.

Tonks spotted James, Remus and Sirius and ran towards them.

"Thank Merlin I found you! I've been trying to get to you. You can't leave yet, Harry's wearing a Bartra bracelet" she explained quickly.

James turned to her angrily.

"You think about telling me that now! Where the hell is Moody? Get him over here to take that wretched thing off!"

Tonks looked at Harry sitting down, with his eyes closed. She realised that she was too late. Harry had already tried to leave and must have suffered an attack.

"Oh God! James I'm so sorry. I wanted to give you some space with Harry. I figured I would catch you before you left and take the bracelet off, but I must have missed you leaving the courtroom. I'll take it off just now"

Tonks made to move towards Harry but Sirius had grabbed her arm to stop her, an angry look in his eyes.

"You! You put that thing on Harry?" he asked not quite wanting to believe it.

"Yeah" Tonks answered guiltily.

"You don't understand, I had to! There wasn't any other choice" she said hurriedly as the expressions on the three men's faces turned murderous.

"You didn't have a choice! What the hell do you mean by that?" James spat at her.

Tonks looked uncomfortably at him.

"When Harry was handed over to Moody, he was...well...really hurt. We needed to heal him. We were under strict orders to keep him restrained. So we..."

"So you decided to put that thing on him to keep him restrained!" Remus cut her off.

Tonks face turned a delicate shade of pink.

“We had to remove the chains but the other officials wouldn’t let us! So I had to put a Bartra bracelet on him, forcing him to stay inside the Ministry. Both...both Harry’s arms and legs were broken. We couldn’t heal him without removing the chains binding him. The Bartra bracelet was the only thing that allowed Harry out of those chains.” Tonks finished.

The three men looked at Tonks with horrified expressions. They turned to look at Harry who was talking to the four teens quietly.

“Just take it off” James said to Tonks, not really knowing how much more heartbreak he could take.

Tonks silently made her way over to Harry and removed the bracelet. Harry looked at her for a moment but didn’t say anything. He stood up and the crowd quickly left the Ministry, still not knowing what to say to each other.

Arthur was waiting for them outside. He approached James quickly.

“Dumbledore has left a message for all of us. He wants everyone to gather at the Headquarters. He said it won’t take long but we have to go. Even Harry” Arthur added as he saw James’s worried glance land on his son.

“Can’t it wait until later? I really need to take Harry home” James asked.

“Dumbledore said it won’t take long” Arthur said sympathetically. Harry really did look exhausted. It was all probably catching up with him.

With a sigh James turned around to face Harry and the others. He repeated Dumbledore’s request.

“Would that be okay?” He directed his question at Harry. He figured that Harry wouldn’t want to go back to the Headquarters since he was held a prisoner there for so long.

But Harry gave a tired smile at his father and nodded his head. Harry didn't care where they went. As long as they got there quickly and he got a chance to rest he was fine with it.

Arthur handed them the portkey that would take them directly inside Grimmauld place. Harry touched the portkey and felt the familiar pull under his navel.

His feet hit the ground a few seconds later and he almost lost his balance. James and Remus saved Harry from falling over. James was starting to get really worried now. Harry could hardly keep his eyes open and he didn't really react to what anyone was saying to him.

James decided to get this stupid meeting over and done with. Harry needed rest and James was desperate to get Harry home. He told the other four teens to stay with Harry and left quickly with the adults to see Dumbledore.

Harry sat down on the sofa and felt his aching back relax a little. He was aching all over. Even the hair on his scalp felt sore. He sat back and closed his eyes again. He wondered if he could actually fall asleep while sitting up. The other four were still talking to him but Harry didn't have the strength to answer them. He could feel the start of a fever grip at him. He only opened his eyes when he felt a hand soothe his burning forehead. He expected to see Ginny or Hermione but instead the worried looking face of Poppy appeared before his eyes.

Harry gave her smile as she gently pulled him to his feet.

"Come on" she whispered to him and led Harry out of the room. The four teens asked them what was going on but Poppy just told them to stay where they were.

Harry was led into another room and as soon as he was lying down, Poppy handed him a few vials of potions. Harry drank them without asking any questions, not that he would ever doubt what Poppy had given him. At once Harry felt the aches and pains leave him and a comfortable sleep took over him. He closed his eyes and let himself drift off as Poppy began healing him.

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James and Lily sat with the other members of the Order. Every member of the Order was not present, in fact there was only the Weasley family, the Potters, Remus, Sirius, Moody and Tonks. Surprisingly the Longbottoms were there as well although Neville wasn't with them. It seemed that Neville was still in shock about everything that happened and had locked himself in a private room upstairs, not wanting to speak to anyone. James wanted to go over and greet them properly but the sound of Dumbledore clearing his throat made him stay in his seat.

"Thank you all for coming to this meeting. I know that most of us have had a very tiring day so I promise not to keep you very long. The reason I have asked you all to come today is to inform you that after today's trial, everyone has to be more vigilant. Not only are you going to have Voldemort and his Death Eaters trying to get to you but many members of the Wizarding world may also show their dissatisfaction at the verdict given today." Dumbledore looked directly at James and Lily. Both parents already knew this. Not everyone was going to be happy that Harry was cleared of all charges.

"Harry's safety is of the utmost importance as is the safety of the Longbottom family. Therefore there is a team sent to your homes as we speak to put up extra wards. I have also asked wards to be placed at the Burrow as your children are friends with Harry and might be targeted. Tonks and Moody will be the only Order members other than myself that will be allowed to visit your homes. Of course Remus and Sirius are included. I did not want anyone to go home just now so that is why I asked you to come here today. In a few hours, the wards will be up and then you all are free to go. I trust that you already know how dangerous these times ahead of us are. Voldemort is going to try everything he can to get to Harry. Especially after the truth about Frank and Alice is out. I would advise you, James and Lily, to keep Harry inside Godric's Hollow at all times. Harry won't be happy, but his safety is more important right now." Dumbledore told the parents.

James thought about Harry's reaction to being told he was to stay indoors at all times. 'Yeah that'll brighten up his day' he thought sarcastically. James agreed with Dumbledore but he wasn't going to

make Harry unhappy. If Harry wanted to go out, then he could go out. He would just have to settle for a group of bodyguards to accompany him.

"Please make yourself comfortable and I will inform you once the wards are up, thank you" with that Dumbledore sat down.

James was instantly at his side.

"Dumbledore, I just wanted to say...I don't even know how to thank you. Harry would never have survived that trial if it wasn't for you. Thank you!"

Dumbledore smiled at him and gave his shoulder a reassuring pat.

"Harry helped himself. If he hadn't saved all those innocent people, there was nothing I could do to help him"

James smiled at him. He turned to see Lily hugging and talking to Alice. Frank met James's eyes and took a few steps towards him. Suddenly the door burst open and Damien, Ron Hermione and Ginny came running inside, panicked looks on their faces.

"Dad! Dad! Harry's having another attack! You've got to help him!" Damien shouted, tears shining in his eyes.

James rushed outside, followed by most of the room's occupants. As soon as he was outside the room, he heard Harry's pain filled cries. He ran towards the sound, heart thumping wildly in his chest.

He burst through the doors and saw Harry thrashing in agony on the bed with a tearful Poppy trying to help him. At once James was beside Harry. He felt Lily rush towards the bed with him. Both parents tried to hold Harry down while Poppy attempted to pour another potion down the boy's throat. The rest of the group stood awkwardly at the door. Damien, Ginny and Hermione were in tears. Ron didn't look far from it. Moody, Tonks, Frank, Alice, Molly and Arthur left the room quickly. It wasn't fair on Harry to be seen by strangers while he was in so much pain. Remus and Sirius managed to usher the hesitant four teens outside as well, not wanting them to see Harry in

so much pain. Dumbledore stood by the door. A grave look on his face. The twinkle in his blue eyes had completely disappeared.

Harry wasn't aware of his parents crouching over him, trying to calm him. He couldn't hear them. All he knew was that his head was going to burst open. The pain was ripping through him like fire. He vaguely wondered if there actually was a white hot poker being held onto his forehead. He wasn't even aware of the agonising moans that left him as he thrashed wildly. Spasms shook his body and he arched up his back every time a spasm hit him.

He had one hand clamped onto his forehead and didn't let anyone pull it away. He could feel hands restraining him and he cried out in pain.

"No, let go! Let me go! Stop!" he shouted in between his cries. James looked at Harry through tears. If they let him go, he would hurt himself as he was thrashing wildly.

Poppy tried to pour some more potions into him but Harry choked on them as he couldn't swallow due to the screams ripping through him.

"What the hell is happening?" Lily yelled through her tears.

"I don't know! He's never had such a reaction. It must be one of the strongest attacks he's ever had!" Poppy yelled back trying frantically to help Harry.

James watched in horror as a trickle of blood began seeping through Harry's fingers. He yanked Harry's hand away from his forehead and saw that the scar on his forehead had burst open. There was blood running down his face as if the wound were new.

"Dumbledore!" Lily shouted as she saw the old wound bleed.

At once Dumbledore was at her side. He looked at the bleeding scar and for the first time he looked lost. He didn't know what to do or what would help him.

"There's nothing we can do, we have to wait for it to pass" he said resignedly.

Harry screamed again in agony as his scar gave another painful throb and he freed his hand from James and clamped it over his head again. He wanted it to stop. He would do anything to make the pain stop. He really didn't think he could take anymore.

James cried out as he saw fresh blood seep out of Harry's nose.

"Someone, please do something, please make this stop!" Lily yelled as she looked at her son, bleeding in agony.

It was as if someone heard the anguished mother as Harry's screams stopped and turned to moans. He stopped thrashing and his breathing was slowing down as well. The attack was over. James let go of Harry's other hand and watched as Harry tried to stifle his moans. He wasn't quite awake yet. He still had his eyes shut tight and he dropped his hand away from his forehead. Lily gathered her son into her arms and hugged him as she cried. She kissed him in his hair and didn't care that Harry's blood was covering her clothes.

Poppy handed her a cloth and she began to wipe away the blood from Harry's face. James watched with his heart breaking. No parent should see their child covered in blood and in so much pain. He cursed Voldemort for being responsible. He knew that Voldemort would hurt Harry like this again and again, until someone finally killed the heartless bastard.

Dumbledore moved out of the room so that only James, Lily and Poppy were left with the now unconscious Harry.

xx

Dumbledore sat with everyone else quietly, deep in thought. The four teens were huddled next to Molly as she made them all drink hot chocolate to calm them down. The atmosphere had completely changed. Instead of it being joyful, everyone sat deep in worry and anxiety. Most didn't even know what was wrong with Harry.

"Dumbledore, what...what was happening to Harry?" Alice asked in a small voice.

Dumbledore turned to look at her, a sad look on his face.

“Harry was cursed with a scar by Voldemort. It’s the lightening bolt shaped scar on his forehead. It is linked with Voldemort. When Voldemort feels a particularly strong emotion, whether it be happiness or extreme anger, it causes immense pain to Harry. I’m assuming that the attack Harry just suffered from was due to Voldemort finding out the truth about you and Frank. He’s probably feeling betrayed by Harry, hence the pain Harry felt today is stronger than anything in the past.” Dumbledore finished.

A look of guilt flashed on both Frank and Alice’s faces. The rest were listening to Dumbledore’s explanation as well and felt a pang of emotion towards Harry.

“Poor dear” Molly mumbled as she carried the four empty cups away.

The four teens sat quietly. They were so sure that Harry was going to have a normal life now that he was free. It was such a cruel reminder to them that Harry would never be free until Voldemort was still around.

xx

James and Lily refused to leave Harry’s side. Poppy was desperately trying to get them to leave so that she could finish healing Harry. Poppy didn’t want the poor parents to see how badly injured their son was. It was enough for them to see him suffering that horrid attack. They didn’t need anymore heartbreak.

After a few minutes of arguing, Poppy gave in. She really had to get on with healing Harry.

She gave James and Lily a stern look before gently turning Harry over onto his stomach. James helped her lift Harry’s sleeping form. Once Harry was on his stomach, Poppy gave a last look at the parents before magically removing Harry’s t shirt.

James couldn’t even gasp at the sight. He felt like someone had punched him in the gut. Harry’s back had multiple bruises, making it look like his entire back was one huge bruise. There were also a few small cuts that must have been from the wood splintering his skin when he fell through the roof while duelling with Neville. How Harry

had been able to even walk was beyond James. James wished he had listened to Poppy and left the room. He knew that he would never forget this image of Harry ever again.

Lily had quickly stridden forward and wordlessly started helping Poppy to rub the healing balm onto Harry's back. Poppy looked at her but didn't say anything. Lily forced herself not to cry. She had shed too many tears. Harry needed healing right now not more tears.

Both Poppy and Lily smoothed the healing balm onto Harry's back, getting a relaxed reaction from the sleeping boy. Lily knew that Harry was lucky not to have broken his spine in such a horrid incident.

Before long the bruises were reacting to the balm and they seemed to lighten in colour. Gently, James and Poppy turned Harry over so that more of the balm could be administered onto Harry's bruised torso. Lily was too busy helping Poppy and didn't notice James going rigid next to her. She heard Poppy asking James if he was okay and turned to see him staring angrily at Harry's face. Completely bewildered by his reaction she looked at Harry's face as well.

"James, what are you..." Lily trailed off as she saw James slowly reach towards Harry's neck. Lily saw James's fingers brush against Harry's neck and realised with a sickening jolt that there were more bruises, in the shape of fingers, around Harry's neck. James fingers trembled as he gently touched the bruises on his son's throat.

Lily felt her legs tremble under her. She sat down on the bed next to her son and fought the surge of emotions in her. How could someone do that to Harry? The thought that someone had wrapped their hands around Harry's neck and had tried to choke him made Lily sick with fury. James suddenly ripped his fingers away from Harry and stormed out of the room. Lily didn't call after him because she knew that James wasn't going to stop. James had never looked so furious in all his life.

She saw Poppy reach for the healing balm again and move towards Harry's neck. She looked sadly at her.

“He’ll be fine.” She reassured her quietly. Lily nodded her head and got up to finish healing Harry. Yes, Harry will be fine. Never again was she going to let anyone hurt her son. Never again!

xx

James came back to the Headquarters a few hours later. He was still shaking with anger and supported a bruised hand. It turned out that James had burst into the Ministry and didn’t even bother to hex Blake. He just slammed his fist into Blake repeatedly, at as many body parts as he could.

It took three Aurors to rip James away from the bloodied up Blake. James was beside himself with rage. He kept on pulling himself free from the Aurors and leaping onto Blake to throttle him. He was shouting all sorts of things at him. Not really aware of what was happening around him.

When he finally calmed down he told the surrounding Aurors what Blake had done to Harry. Blake was dismissed from his Auror duties until further enquiry. Blake left the Ministry, still bleeding furiously from the nose and supporting a broken jaw. James wasn’t quite satisfied with Blake’s punishment but was escorted out of the Ministry and was told sternly that he was to stay away from Blake. The Ministry would deal with the punishments. James replied with a simple, “if I see him anywhere near my sons, I’ll kill him!”

James came back to the Headquarters to find Harry soundly asleep. All his injuries had been taken care off. Poppy told him that Harry was probably going to be asleep for the next few hours at least. James and Lily went into another room to let Harry sleep.

As James walked into the kitchen he caught sight of his younger son sitting with his friends. He smiled warmly at him. In the midst of all this chaos he had completely ignored Damien.

Damien looked hesitantly at him before looking away. James was momentarily confused. He walked over to Damien and gently put his arm around him.

“Damy?”

The younger boy turned around to face him. He had a strange look on his face.

“I guess you’re talking to me again then?” he asked quietly.

James realised with a jolt why Damien had looked at him like that. James had given Damien the silent treatment for the last week or so. He looked embarrassedly at him. He had been unfair on Damien. He was angry at Damien, and his anger was justified but he shouldn’t have treated him like that for so long.

“I can’t stay mad at you forever.” He said softly.

Damien seemed to be fighting the urge to argue with him or to just shrug it all off and be on good terms with his father again. He never got a chance to decide as James pulled him into an embrace. Damien didn’t even care that his friends were there, staring at him. It felt really good to be comforted by his dad again. Damien had really missed him these last days.

“I missed you” he whispered to his dad.

James lightly kissed the top of his head, making the boy blush.

“I did as well” he whispered back.

“Now that Harry’s home, I want you to promise me that you’ll never keep anything secret from me if it concerns Harry’s safety, promise?” James said with a stern sort of look on his face.

“Promise” Damien said, smiling at his dad. It felt so good to hear those words at last, ‘Harry’s home’.

xx

The wards had finally been put in place. The Longbottom family went home, with Neville still refusing to speak to anyone other than his parents. Moody and Tonks left as well, promising to check up on everyone. The Weasley family also wanted to leave but Ron, Ginny and Hermione insisted to stay until Harry woke up. They refused to

leave until they saw that Harry was okay. Harry had still not woken up after suffering that attack from Voldemort.

James asked Poppy if that was normal and the tired nurse responded with,

“After all those potions I threw down his throat he’ll be sleeping until morning, no doubt! It’s better this way. His body needs to do a lot of healing. The more he sleeps the better he’ll heal”

However, this did nothing to convince the teens to go home. In the end it was agreed that they four teens could stay at the Headquarters with the Potter family. James insisted that Harry walked through the front doors of Godric’s Hollow instead of waking up inside it. So that meant that they would have to wait until Harry woke up.

So the four teens settled for staying the night in the Headquarters. Molly ended up staying as well along with Remus.

“Well, looks like we’re having quite the sleep over party” Sirius chuckled as he conjured up more blankets and pillows for all the guests.

xx

Harry groggily opened his eyes and blinked a few times to allow his eyesight to adjust. He looked around him and tried to make out where he was. It was the middle of the night, judging by the darkness around him. He could still feel the slight burning of his scar. He lifted a hand to feel his scar. He was surprised to find a small plaster covering his scar. ‘I guess he knows about the Longbottoms’ Harry thought miserably to himself.

Harry pulled himself into a sitting position. He felt so much better than before. He was still feeling a little fatigued but at least it didn’t hurt to move around anymore.

Harry sat up in bed and looked at the small table next to him. He really wanted something to drink. He had not had any water for twenty four hours now.

He made to move out of his bed when he realised that there was something blocking his way. Harry looked a little bewildered at the sleeping forms of his mum and dad. Harry didn't expect them to be with him just now. He had always woken up alone, no matter how injured he had been.

Harry found the image of his mum and dad asleep, half on the chair and half on the side of his bed quite amusing. He laughed quietly at the sight. He got up using the other side of the bed and tiptoed over to the table. He poured himself a glass of refreshing water. Once his thirst was sufficiently quenched he tiptoed back to his bed.

When he climbed into his bed, the movement caused Lily to wake up rather suddenly. She looked up and saw Harry pulling his covers back over himself, sitting up in bed.

She sat up at once, all sleep gone from her eyes in moments. Harry noticed her sitting up and turned to look at her. They stared at each other for a moment, not really knowing what to say.

"How...how are you feeling?" Lily asked, awkwardly.

Harry smiled at her.

"A lot better"

Lily let out a relieved breath.

"That's good" she said, more to herself.

"You don't have to do this" Harry said quietly.

Lily looked at Harry confusedly.

"Um...do what?" she asked.

"Stay the night with me. I'm fine now. You guys should go and lie down comfortably" Harry said, not really knowing why he was saying this. He didn't want his parents to leave.

Lily only smiled warmly at him.

“Don’t worry about us. We’re very comfortable right here” she said.

Lily was enjoying this. It was so nice to speak to Harry and not have him scowl and glare back at you in response. Harry seemed to be thinking along the same lines. His face went a little red and he diverted his gaze from his mum.

“I...I wanted to just say that...I shouldn’t have treated you the way I did. I’m...I’m sorry about all that. If I knew...” Harry was cut off as Lily moved from the chair onto his bed. She shocked Harry when she enveloped him into a hug. Harry didn’t really react until a few seconds later.

“No one blames you, Harry. You were lied to your whole life. You didn’t know how else to act. Please, don’t even think for a second that anyone will hold what you said or did against you.”

Lily let go of him and looked at Harry, emerald eyes boring into emerald eyes.

“We should just forget about all of that. We have a chance to start from the beginning. Okay” she added comfortingly.

Harry nodded to her question, still not quite convinced that his previous actions were going to be forgotten in a hurry.

James stirred as all the talking woke him up. He opened his hazel eyes and saw Harry and Lily sitting on the bed, talking quietly. He sat up and rubbed at his neck. He had slept at a funny angle.

Lily and Harry both turned to look at him. Lily smiled and moved from the bed to sit back on the chair.

“Harry, you okay” James managed to mumble out, cursing his sleepy voice.

“Yeah, I’m fine” Harry responded, enjoying the way James was trying futilely to wake up.

James didn’t seem convinced. He reached over and placed a hand onto Harry’s forehead.

"You still have the fever. I'll get the fever reducing potion" he made to move and get the potion but Harry stopped him.

"Dad"

James stayed in his seat. He couldn't describe the feeling that overtook him every time Harry called him 'dad'. He tried to keep a straight face but a smile forced its way onto his face anyway.

"Just stay, I don't need any more potions" Harry said quietly.

James and Lily were surprised at how different Harry was from before. Partly because he wasn't glaring at them and saying hurtful things. James and Lily did most of the talking while Harry slid down to lie on the bed and listened to them. Harry wasn't even paying attention to what was being said. Just the sound of his parent's voices was enough.

"Harry, do you want something to eat?" Lily asked suddenly realising that he had not had anything to eat the whole day.

Harry lifted his head slightly off his pillow to look at the clock.

"It's four in the morning" he said mockingly.

"So? You eat when you're hungry, regardless of the time" James said with a smile.

Harry shook his head.

"I'm not hungry. I'll eat in the morning"

James and Lily decided not to push it with Harry. If there was anything they had learnt about their eldest son it was that Harry hated being forced into doing anything.

James and Lily continued talking about what had happened while Harry was sleeping. They told him about the wards being put in place and that the Weasley kids were staying the night along with Hermione and Damien. Harry could feel himself relaxing and before long he was soundly asleep again. James and Lily stayed the whole night with

Harry, just watching their son sleeping peacefully, in what must have been months.

XX

Lord Voldemort had lost. He had not thought it was possible but he had to admit now that he had lost everything. Harry had betrayed him. That much he knew already with his Horcruxes being hunted and destroyed. No, what completely destroyed Lord Voldemort was the knowledge that Harry had betrayed him while he was still calling him 'father'. He had stood before him, claiming to be loyal to him and all along he had helped the Longbottoms. Harry had gone against his orders and not only did he not kill them, he helped them *survive*.

Voldemort watched as the bodies of two of his spy Death Eaters were dragged from the room. He had killed the informing Death Eaters out of rage. They had told him about Harry's trial and the arrival of the Longbottoms. They had also managed to tell him that the Ministry had confirmed that indeed all six of Voldemort's Horcruxes had now been destroyed.

Voldemort had not been aware that the Hufflepuff cup and Gryffindor's sword had been destroyed as well. He was forced to admit that he had lost Harry forever. The thing that really broke his heart though wasn't that Harry had betrayed him. It was the hard fact that Harry had never really been loyal to him in the first place. He defied him at the very beginning. He let the Longbottoms live, he stole the Lajohari Josteen and then he left Voldemort's side and began destroying his Horcruxes.

Voldemort told himself that his Harry had died the very night the Longbottoms were saved. His Harry was no longer here. His loyal and obedient son was killed when Harry decided to let the Longbottoms live.

'Okay, Potter, you want a war. I'll give you a war.'

Voldemort made a quiet promise to himself that he was going to make Harry Potter pay. The whole wizarding world was going to witness the wrath and revenge of the Dark Lord.

Chapter Fifty Seven

Harry woke up in the morning to hushed voices.

“No, go away! He’s still asleep. He needs to rest”

“He’s been sleeping forever now! Come on, get him up so that he can have some breakfast”

“Sirius, you’re acting worse than a child!”

“Lils, I am still a child, emotionally anyway. Now come on! We should wake him up.”

“I swear to Merlin, if you wake him up I will skin you alive!” Lily threatened.

Harry couldn’t help the smile that came with such a threat. He opened his eyes and looked at the two arguing adults in the room.

“He needs some food. How’s he going to heal on an empty stomach?” Sirius argued with a sincere look on his face.

“He’s got a point” Harry added.

Lily and Sirius spun around to see Harry pushing his covers away so he could climb out of bed.

“Harry, I’m so sorry we woke you. I told Padfoot to keep his voice down!” Lily said while sending a glare at him.

Sirius however just shrugged the glare away and looked at his eldest godson.

“You okay?” he asked, losing the smile that was usually plastered over his face.

Harry rolled his eyes as he answered.

“I’m fine, everyone has to stop asking me that” he mumbled.

Sirius smiled at him.

"We have breakfast being served downstairs. I suggest we all go and fill ourselves up" Sirius said as he gave Lily a cheeky smile.

"I really need to shower first" Harry said at once. He could still smell that awful damp smell of the cell Blake had tossed him into.

"Your dad's just getting some clean clothes for you. Why don't you shower and I'll fetch them." Lily gestured to the door to his right.

Sirius and Lily left as Harry walked into the bathroom. After relaxing under the shower, Harry walked back into his room, wrapped in nothing but a towel. He caught himself in the mirror and at once saw the fading bruises on his chest and stomach. His face didn't look too bad. His cheek still held the bruise given to him from Blake, but otherwise he looked okay. He noticed how red and raw looking his scar was. Harry felt a twinge of regret as he thought about the Frank and Alice. Voldemort was not going to rest until he got to them. Harry knew that he was going to be hunted down more furiously now as well. Judging by the pain he had gone through last night, Voldemort was hungry for Harry's blood.

Harry pushed all thoughts about Voldemort away. He didn't want to think about that right now. He picked up the pair of blue trousers and slipped them on. The door opened and Lily came inside with Poppy. Harry gave the nurse a warm smile as she rushed over and started checking him again.

"Good, the balm seems to be working. Put some more on before getting dressed. I'll apply some on your back. Don't know how lucky you are Harry. Someone up there really likes you" she commented as she grabbed the healing balm.

Lily looked at Harry and smiled but this time her smile had a little sadness to it. Harry realised that she was looking sadly at the bruises on his chest. Harry turned around and took the healing balm from Poppy.

"It's fine. I'm a fast healer you really should know that by now. I don't need this" Harry threw the bottle away, and ignored Poppy's protests. He quickly slipped on the white top that was left lying on the bed for him.

“Well, if you don’t like healing balms and potions then you should stop jumping off building!” Poppy snapped at him.

“It’s not like I do that on purpose” Harry laughed, causing Lily’s heart to skip a beat. This was the first time she had heard him laugh properly. She decided that she loved Harry’s laugh.

“Well, maybe not, but if you are going to get hurt, then you have to take all the healing potions to get...” Poppy was cut off as Harry gently held her hand.

“You don’t have to worry. I can’t thank you enough for helping me Poppy.” Harry said softly.

“I’m a nurse, Harry. It’s what I do” Poppy smiled back.

“You know what I mean” Harry replied looking a little uneasy.

“You put yourself and your family at risk by coming to the Wizengamot and testifying. You didn’t have to do that” Harry continued, now definitely avoiding looking at her eyes.

“If it wasn’t for you, Harry, I wouldn’t have a family” Poppy almost whispered back. She gave Harry a small kiss on his forehead in a very motherly way and left the room drying her eyes discreetly.

Lily looked affectionately at her son.

“Come on, Harry. Everyone’s waiting” she said. Harry walked along with his mum, feeling more relaxed than he thought possible.

Harry stopped just before going into the kitchen. He heard Damien’s voice along with his dad’s and Ron’s. He listened for a moment, gesturing to his mum to listen as well.

“He doesn’t like it if you keep on looking at him. He gets really bothered with lots of attention” came Ron’s voice.

“Yeah, and he absolutely hates it if you keep on asking him if he’s okay, or if he’s feeling well” Damien added in.

"I'll vouch for that!" Sirius added with a chuckle.

"What else?" James asked, he sounded as if he was taking notes.

"Well, he likes it if you are calm and casual around him. He doesn't like a lot of fuss being made around him, especially about him" Damien added.

Harry stifled a laugh at the topic of discussion. He smiled at his mum and both opened the door to walk in.

"He also doesn't like people talking about him behind his back" Harry added as entered the kitchen.

James, Sirius, Damien and Ron all turned to look at Harry, guilty expressions on their faces.

"Harry, you're up" Damien yelled excitedly, getting over the shock.

"Yeah, and before any of you ask, I'm feeling fine" Harry said as he joined his dad at the table.

Ron blushed a little as the words were nearly out of his mouth. James looked fondly over at Harry who had taken the seat next to him.

"I just thought that since Damien knows you so well, he could share his knowledge with the rest of us" James told Harry.

Harry looked at Damien who couldn't help but smile widely at the image of his dad and brother sitting together at the breakfast table. Harry didn't comment on what James had just said. Instead he observed his surroundings. He saw his mum with Mrs Weasley, preparing breakfast a few feet away. The smell of sausages and bacon wafted over to him, making his stomach growl with hunger. Harry had not had a decent meal since he left Voldemort.

He looked at Ron who seemed to be deep in conversation with Sirius.

"I thought you said Hermione and Ginny were here as well" he said to his dad.

“They are. They’re just not down yet” James answered.

“Hey! When did you tell him that?” Damien asked, an annoyed look on his face.

“Um...last night” James answered back.

“Why didn’t you tell us Harry was awake? The whole reason we stayed back was so that we could see Harry when he woke up!” Damien cried out at once.

“Damy, it was four in the morning. And besides, I fell asleep again in ten minutes” Harry reassured him.

Damien continued to throw angry looks at his dad.

“Still...could have woken me up...” he continued to mumble and moan.

The door opened and Harry looked up to see Hermione and Ginny walk in. They had worried looks on their faces but at the sight of Harry sitting at the table, looking as good as new, their faces brightened up at once.

“Harry! Oh thank God you’re up! How are you? Are you feeling better?” both girls started throwing questions at him.

Harry smiled again at the question he had answered so many times already.

“I’m as good as new” he told them as they also sat down at the table.

Lily and Molly carried the breakfast over to the large table. Molly looked at Harry, but didn’t say anything to him. She did place the tray of sausages and bacon directly in front of him though. Harry helped himself to breakfast and realised how at ease he was. He knew that spending all that time with the four teens was the reason for this. He was glad that they had stayed the night.

As soon as breakfast was over the dishes were cleared away, but the group stayed in their seats. They were all just talking about small things, not anything that concerned the trial or anything like that.

Harry noticed that the door opened again and two boys entered. Harry didn't recognise them but they seemed to search the table and their eyes rested on him. They gave Harry a wide grin and walked in.

James and Sirius stood up as the two boys walked over to the table. From the way everyone was staring at the two boys, it was clear that no one had seen them before. Harry rose to his feet as well, getting a little annoyed at how the two kept their eyes fixed on him.

"Hi everyone. Don't mind us. We just came to see Harry" one of them said brightly.

Harry looked a little taken back as he stared at them. They looked older than him, maybe around the age of twenty one, maybe twenty two years old. Both had brown hair and dazzling blue eyes. They were brothers, Harry could tell as they looked so similar. They were quite tall and seemed unable to stop smiling.

"You don't recognise us do you, Harry?" one of them asked with a grin.

"No" Harry answered back simply.

"Blimey, Harry! How many kids did you have to save from Death Eaters by pushing through a fireplace, not to remember us!" the other one laughed.

The room was silent and every eye was now on Harry. Harry looked carefully at the two boys and then recognised them as the same two kids he had helped escape from Riddle Manor ten years ago. Harry hadn't really been able to see their faces clearly as they were covered in blood and dirt. Harry remembered racing along the dark corridors and into the house elves quarter. He had pushed them into the house elves fireplace and told them to floo home. He had to push them into saying the name of their home so that they could escape.

“Keroon place” Harry whispered as the memory came flooding back to him.

“Ah, so you do remember” the two laughed as Harry looked at them in utter surprise.

Harry couldn’t forget that incident. He was nearly killed by Nott because of it.

“Yeah, I remember” Harry said out loud.

“I just never thought I would run into you two again” Harry said. His head was still spinning.

“It’s a small world” one of them answered.

James and Lily watched the two beaming boys talk with Harry. They remembered the two boys as well. They had watched the memory of their rescue in Harry’s penesive.

“Oh, we have no manners at all! We haven’t even introduced ourselves. I’m David Bones and this is my younger brother, Darrell Bones.” David said as he extended his hand to shake Harry’s.

“Bones?” Harry asked as he shook hands with them.

“Yeah, Bones” David replied with a deep smile.

“Are you...you can’t be related to...” Harry began but was cut off by a booming voice.

“You’re right, Harry.”

Harry and everyone else in the kitchen spun around to see Amelia Bones standing at the door.

She was looking directly at Harry and was smiling warmly at him.

“They are my sons”

Harry heard the gasp that went around the room. So Harry hadn’t imagined the looks Amelia Bones gave him in the courtroom. She

had been helping Harry since he had saved her sons all those years ago.

Amelia Bones walked calmly into the room, never taking her eyes away from Harry. She stood next to her sons and put a hand onto David's shoulder.

"I always wondered who the strange child was that helped save my children's lives. I had assumed that it was another prisoner who had figured out a way to escape and had, by luck, found my boys as well. I don't know what my life would have been like if you hadn't helped them"

Harry found his face burn with embarrassment. He couldn't really take compliments very well.

"So, that's why you helped me. You gave Dumbledore the chance to fight for me." Harry asked keeping his eyes fixed at Madame Bones face.

Amelia gave a small smile before answering.

"Mr Potter, I assure you that had you acted like a Death Eater I would have sentenced you to Azkaban, regardless of what you had done for my sons. I take my job very seriously and would not have jeopardised the wizarding world if you were any sort of threat. The only reason you were cleared was because you deserved to be."

Harry looked away from her. He knew that she was lying. Her judgement had been blinded by the fact that the boy standing trial was the same boy that had saved her sons.

"I'm glad that I was on the panel of judges though. It seemed like Minister Fudge had already decided your fate. He wouldn't have allowed Dumbledore to fight the case had Mr Reid and I not intervened."

Harry suddenly remembered something that had been nagging at the back of his mind. The file that Dumbledore had presented with evidence that the Minister had gave the order to kill certain Death Eaters upon capture. Minister Fudge had looked completely thrown

by it. He had even asked Dumbledore where he had got the information from. It made sense now. Amelia Bones must have given it to him. She was the head of Magical Law Enforcement. She would definitely have access to information like that.

"It was you wasn't it. The one who gave Dumbledore information about the Death Eaters being sentenced to death upon capture." Harry asked, already knowing the answer.

Amelia had a smirk plastered over her face.

"Like I said, Minister Fudge wasn't planning on giving you a fair trial. I only helped by making sure all the facts were brought to light"

With that said she turned to speak to James and Lily. Harry stood, lost in his thoughts. He knew that the trial was heavily influenced by Dumbledore and his Order. He was willing to bet anything that most of the Aurors present there were members of the Order and were instructed to help Harry. That was why he got so many people voting to clear him of all charges.

David and Darrell sat with the rest and started telling them that they had seen Harry's picture in the daily prophet and had at once told their mother that he was the same kid that had helped them escape. Harry was only half listening. He was still too engrossed in the happening of the trial to pay attention to anything else.

Eventually the Bones family left and with them the Weasley family, along with Hermione left as well. Harry was left with his family and Sirius and Remus. They were getting ready to leave as well.

"Harry, before I forget, here's your stuff" Sirius handed Harry back his wand and the small box, containing Harry's small supply of potions. He had taken it from the Ministry to return back to Harry.

"Thanks" Harry muttered as he quickly crammed the wand and his box into his jeans.

Harry felt a mix of strange emotions at the thought of returning to Godric's Hollow. He was excited and a part of him was happy to finally return home. However, another part of him just couldn't get rid

of the images that seemed to be burned into his mind. He could see the attic that he spent so many cold nights in, shivering and crying. He could see every room clearly in his mind and the memories of being abused and beaten. He knew that it wasn't his parents who had done that. He wasn't even inside Godric's Hollow at the time. But he still couldn't help the shiver that ran through him at the thought of staying there. He wished he could speak up and say that he didn't want to go, but he knew his parents wouldn't understand. They would jump to the wrong conclusion, thinking that Harry didn't want to stay with them. So Harry quietly prepared himself to go home. He hated Voldemort for doing this to him. He had completely destroyed Harry's perception of his home.

Just before the Potters left, a small house elf appeared in front of them. He was holding Harry's black jeans and t shirt.

"Master, I wanted to have permission to discard these garments" the elf said, bowing deeply in front of Sirius.

Sirius looked at the clothes and quickly answered.

"Yes, I think Harry can survive with not having these anymore. He'll be getting a whole new wardrobe, no doubt." He said as he winked at Harry.

"As you wish, Master" the elf said, again bowing deeply. He was just about to dissapartae when Harry stopped him.

"Wait! Hold on" Harry hurried over to the elf.

Everyone was looking at Harry in surprise. He couldn't possibly want to keep those clothes"

"Harry, what..."James trailed off as he saw Harry take the black jeans from the elf and rummage the back pockets. He took out a folded piece of paper and quickly stuffed it into the back pocket of his jeans. He gave the tattered looking jeans back to the elf and told him that he could destroy the clothes now.

Harry walked back towards the small group and offered no explanation of what the paper was that he had taken. After a few

moments, the Potters decided to leave. They could figure out what all that was about later.

[illegible]

Chapter Fifty Eight

Harry found himself standing outside Godric's Hollow, surrounded by his mum, dad and Damien. His heart was thumping painfully in his chest and he felt vaguely sick. He felt his mum slip her hand into his. He looked at her and gave her a strained smile.

"Welcome home, Harry" James said softly as he opened the door, leading them inside the cottage.

Harry walked over the threshold and was immediately led towards the living room. Harry had been to Godric's Hollow twice before this occasion. But both times, Harry knew he was only there for a particular purpose, whether it was to give the Lahyoo Jisteen to Damien or to find his wand. He knew that he wouldn't be staying on those occasions. But now he knew that he was here to stay and this place was going to be his home. Harry didn't really know how he felt about that. He braced himself as he entered the living room.

His first impression was that the whole cottage had a very lived in look. It wasn't overly tidy but it wasn't messy either. He walked into the brightly decorated room and noticed that the room was different to how he remembered it. He looked around the spacious room and felt his heart settle down a little. He silently observed the room while James and Lily removed their outdoor robes. Damien was watching Harry closely for his reaction.

Harry looked at the photos littering the mantelpiece. He walked over and saw, with a jolt, his picture as a baby, giggling and trying to get out of his cot. He smiled as he saw similar pictures of Damien as well. There was a picture of Damien, on what must have been his first day at Hogwarts. He was being reluctantly, hugged and kissed by a teary Lily.

Harry spent the next few minutes, quietly looking around the room. He was brought out of his thoughts by Lily.

"Harry, do you want to see your room"? She asked softly. Damien was told to stay while Lily took Harry to his room.

Harry was led upstairs by Lily. As he reached the landing Harry cast an awkward look at the small staircase that led to the attic as he walked towards his room. He could almost hear the whimpering of a small child. He shut his eyes and tried to shake away the memories. 'It didn't happen here. Stop doing this.' he told himself angrily.

Lily led him to the former guest room. The room was not very big, but it was bigger than Damien's. It had a four poster bed and a large four door wardrobe. A small desk was facing the window. Harry didn't comment on the room. He noticed that Lily was watching him carefully. He walked into the room and sat down on the bed.

"Um...is...is everything okay?" Lily asked.

Harry didn't really know what he should say. There really wasn't anything to comment on.

"Yeah" he managed after a moment or two.

Lily knew that to Harry, the room seemed really small. She hadn't forgotten the room Harry had when he was with Voldemort. But there wasn't anything she could do. This was the only room they had to give to Harry.

"Do you want to rest for a bit, before dinner?" Lily asked. She knew that Harry was still recovering from his horrendous capture and the attack from Voldemort.

"Yeah, okay" Harry answered.

He was feeling very uncomfortable being here. He had thought living in Godric's Hollow would be difficult, but this was just unbearable. He really needed time to himself, to get his thoughts sorted.

Lily left and went downstairs to tell James and Damien to let Harry rest a little bit.

Harry lay back in his bed. He focused his breathing to slow down, so that he could relax. He knew this was going to happen. He knew that he was going to freak out when he was brought to Godric's Hollow. Harry kept on repeating that his memories weren't real. He shouldn't

blame Godric's Hollow for everything that happened. But however hard he tried, he found he just couldn't stop the memories coming back at him. He sighed as he turned over to his side. His back was starting to sting and he felt the bruise on his head throb painfully. Before he could help it he fell into an exhausted sleep, still fully clothed on his bed.

He woke up to find Damien looming over him. Harry was momentarily startled to see his brother's face peering at him. Damien grinned at him as Harry sat up in bed.

"You're up! It's about time. You know Harry you sleep a lot for a sixteen year old!" he said while shooting a questioning glare at him.

Harry only gave him an annoyed look. It was apparent that Damien didn't know the extent of Harry's injuries.

"What are you doing here?" Harry asked as he lay back down, trying to soothe his thumping headache.

"I came to see if you wanted any dinner?" Damien replied as he sat on the edge of Harry's bed.

Harry was not feeling hungry right now. He was still feeling the aches and pains shooting through his body and just wanted to sleep some more.

"I'm not hungry"

"Okay, mum thought you might say that. She told me to tell you that she'll keep your plate aside for you, if you want to eat later." Damien replied.

Harry could feel his eyes, getting heavier again. He only nodded his head in response. Damien gave a worried look over at him.

"You sure you okay?" he asked.

"What was it you told dad only this morning?" Harry said as he attempted to give Damien a mock glare.

Damien flushed at the memory and answered.

"That you hate being asked if you're feeling well"

"So stop annoying me then" Harry said.

"Okay, I'll go, but before I do, don't you think you should get changed." Damien asked as he gave a pointed look at Harry's clothes.

"Um...I, I don't have any other clothes" Harry said as he looked at his clothes.

Damien got up and walked over to the wardrobe. He pulled it open so that Harry could see the clothes inside. Harry climbed off his bed and walked over to the wardrobe, full of new clothes. He looked at Damien questioningly.

"Mum and dad bought all this stuff for you when you were at Hogwarts. They figured that once you came home for Christmas and then summer, you would at least have your own clothes" Damien explained.

Harry felt his heart constrict painfully at the thought. His parents must have been devastated when he left them to go back to Voldemort. He shuddered at the memory as it brought back what happened in Hogsmeade earlier that day with James. Harry had come so close to killing him. For the hundredth time, Harry thanked Sirius for saving his dad.

Damien left to tell his parents that Harry was going to rest some more. Harry quickly pulled out a pair of comfortable looking pyjamas and decided to get changed. He crawled back to his bed and thought hard about everything that he had done to make his parents life miserable. Engulfed by shame and guilt, Harry resolved to try and be less of a problem from now on. With these thoughts, Harry drifted off to sleep again.

xx

James and Lily cracked open the door and peered into the dark room. Harry had slept most of the day and hadn't even wanted any dinner.

They wanted to check on him to see if he was okay. Both parents were eager to spend as much time with Harry as possible but at the same time they didn't want to stifle Harry with too much attention. They had seen enough of Harry's childhood memories to see that Harry spent most of his time alone. They both had agreed that they would give Harry as much time as he needed to get used to having a family around him.

James and Lily saw Harry sleeping quite peacefully in his bed. Lily smiled as she saw Harry lying on his stomach. 'He used to sleep like that when he was a baby' she thought to herself. She walked over and gently, trying not to wake him up, she felt his forehead for his temperature.

"His fever's gone" she whispered to James.

"Good" came his reply.

"Well, we should go. Poppy said he needs to sleep plenty so that he can heal" Lily said as she pulled James away from the bed.

James reached over and gently pulled the covers up to Harry's shoulders. He turned around and was about to walk over to the door, when he noticed something thrown over the back of the chair next to the desk. He looked closely and saw Harry's blue jeans thrown over the chair, but the thing that had caught his eye was the corner of the white piece of paper, sticking out of the back pocket. He had wondered about what this paper was that Harry had taken out of his old clothes. He seemed really connected to it. The way he had rushed over to take it out, before the elf destroyed the clothes. He saw the way Harry had quickly stuffed it into his pocket. He looked at Lily and after giving her a grin, he walked over to the chair.

He was just about to pull the paper out to see what it was when a hand grabbed his. He looked up to see Lily glaring at him, a shocked look on her pretty face.

"James! No, you shouldn't. It's private. You shouldn't look through his private things" she whispered to him.

“Lily, I’m not going to do anything. I just want to see what this is. I’m sure Harry won’t mind” he whispered back.

Lily opened her mouth to argue but James put a finger to his lips and gestured over to Harry.

“You’ll wake him up” He whispered to her.

Lily let go of his hand but continued to glare at him.

“Well, I’m not going to be a part of this. I don’t want to make Harry mad at me” she said to him while crossing her arms over her chest.

James chuckled over the look she was giving him and pulled out the paper. As soon as he pulled it out he realised that it wasn’t paper, but something that felt a lot thicker. It was folded over. James opened up the paper and let out a gasp as he saw what the paper was. His hazel eyes were fixed on the paper and he seemed unable to speak. He looked lost for words and Lily saw his hazel eyes sparkle with tears. Lily looked at her husband’s bizarre reaction and let curiosity take over her. She moved next to him so that she could see what the paper was.

Lily let out a soft gasp as well as looked at the paper James was holding. Whatever she had been expecting, it wasn’t this. James was holding a photograph of a baby Harry being kissed and cuddled by James and Lily. They were waving at the camera and would lean in to kiss each other. Lily recognised the photograph instantly. It was one she had kept in her album, hidden away in her room. She looked at James, who was still staring at the photograph, unable to say anything.

This was what Harry had saved from getting destroyed along with his old clothes. It was kept in the back pocket of his trousers, indicating that Harry kept this photograph on him at all times. ‘How did he get this photograph in the first place?’ Lily thought to herself. She realised that Harry must have strong feelings of love for his parents since he kept this with him. It made her heart ache to think that Harry would do something like this.

James folded the photograph back and returned it to the back pocket of Harry's jeans. He looked just as affected by the photograph as Lily.

"You were right. We shouldn't look through Harry's private things" he said in an odd strained voice.

Both parents walked over to Harry's sleeping form and Lily found she couldn't suppress the urge to embrace him. She leaned over him and kissed him softly. Harry moved a little but was in a deep sleep and didn't wake up. James and Lily both left Harry's room, both silently making promises with themselves that they were going to give Harry all the love he had missed out on.

xx

Harry woke up with a start. He couldn't remember what he was dreaming about but he knew that it wasn't pleasant. He lay in his bed, just listening to the odd sounds coming from the house. He glanced over at the clock and saw that it was five in the morning. He had near enough slept the whole day! Harry tried to just rest in his bed, but his stomach was rumbling with hunger. He felt quite thirsty and decided to get up and get some water. He quietly got up, feeling much better than he did earlier that day. His back was feeling better and his headache was gone.

Harry quietly crept down the stairs, careful not to wake anyone up. He was still trying to rub the sleep away from his eyes and wasn't really thinking about where he was going. He knew his way about the house and his feet led him to the kitchen instinctively. He flipped on the light to find himself standing in the kitchen which looked exactly like he remembered it. Harry froze at the sight of the kitchen. He hadn't thought about what he would feel coming into the kitchen. It was as if someone was turning up the volume and he could hear his own screams, pleading to his dad not to hurt him. Harry squeezed his eyes shut and tried to block out the screams. It didn't work. He felt his stomach lurch as he clearly heard his father's voice hiss at him 'You burn my food, I get to burn you'

Harry stumbled back, trying to get out of the kitchen as fast as he could, but it seemed his legs wouldn't obey him. He felt himself break down as he heard himself scream inside his own head, 'No dad!

Please don't! Please dad, I'm sorry, I'm sorry for everything! Please don't'

Harry rushed forward, hands fumbling at the back door. He had to get out of here, he couldn't bear to stay here any longer. He wrenched the door open and rushed outside. The cool summer air whipped at his face as he stumbled outside. Harry got a few steps away from the house before collapsing onto the ground. He sat on the cool grass, taking shaky breaths. He felt like all the air had been punched out of him. He hadn't been prepared for that. His worst memory was just brought to surface when he was least expecting it.

'What's wrong with me?' he thought angrily to himself after he calmed down. He knew that all those incidents had not happened here, that his parents weren't responsible for all the pain he had gone through. Voldemort was responsible for all of that. He got back up on his feet and slowly made his way back. However, no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't get himself to go back inside. He resigned himself to just sit on the steps outside. How long he was sitting there, he didn't know. He was caught up in his own thoughts. He felt a warm hand on his shoulder and looked up to see Lily looking at him. Lily sat down next to her son and for a few minutes, both sat in complete silence. They watched the sky turn pink as the sun was coming up.

"I didn't mean to wake you up" Harry said finally.

"You didn't" Lily replied softly.

"I just came down to get a drink, couldn't sleep" Lily continued.

Harry just nodded his head. He was feeling very foolish, sitting outside in the early hours of the morning. He didn't look up at his mum. He kept his eyes focused on the ground. Lily didn't have to ask why Harry was sitting outside. She and James should have seen this coming. Harry was probably having a horrible time, coming back to a place he could only remember as hell. She wrapped her arm around Harry, who seemed to tense at first before relaxing a little. He wasn't used to being hugged. It was awkward for him.

"You'll make your own memories here, Harry" she said softly to him.

Harry could only nod again, even though he knew that his memories of Godric's Hollow would never leave him. He wished he was alone, or that he could cope with everything that was thrown his way. With great effort he looked at his mum. He expected to see sympathy in her eyes, something that made Harry cringe. Surprisingly the only thing Harry saw shining in her eyes was understanding and love. She gently took his hand and pulled him into standing up. She led him into the kitchen and through to the living room.

"You want something to eat?" she asked as Harry sat on the couch.

Harry smiled at the question. It seemed that's all Lily was concerned about. Harry's appetite.

"It's too early to eat anything" Harry answered.

"How about a hot drink?" she asked. It was still too chilly to be sitting outside in the early hours of the morning, even if it was July.

"Yeah, okay" Harry answered.

Lily disappeared into the kitchen and came back out, almost instantly, holding two steaming mugs.

Harry took the drink and looked at the dark liquid inside. He smelled it before looking questioningly at his mum.

"What?" she asked as she sipped her own drink.

"What is this?" Harry asked, looking genuinely confused.

"It's hot chocolate" Lily answered.

Harry gave her another confused look.

"Why are you melting chocolate and then drinking it?" he asked.

Lily laughed at Harry's question.

"It's an actual drink. Muggles drink it as well, although we do have many, many other flavours. You can't tell me you've never had hot chocolate before" she said.

Harry didn't answer, but took a small sip. He savoured the taste for a moment before taking another gulp.

"I take it you approve" Lily laughed as Harry finished his drink in a matter of seconds.

"Definitely" Harry answered while wearing a very sheepish grin. He had never tasted hot chocolate before.

Lily and Harry had another mug of hot chocolate and Harry found himself relaxing, while listening to his mothers soothing voice.

xx

It had been four days since Harry had come to Godric's Hollow. Sirius and Remus were the only ones to visit the Potters. James told Harry that everyone was told to give them some time alone, to reconnect as a family.

Harry spent most of his time with Damien. He spent as much time as he could outside Godric's Hollow, enjoying the summer in their garden. If anything, Harry's situation worsened as the days went by. Harry started suffering from nightmares. He kept on reliving his horrific memories at night. He would wake up, drenched in cold sweat. No matter how hard he tried he couldn't free himself from his nightmares. He hadn't suffered like this ever since he was eight years old. He had stored all these memories away in his pensive but for some reason it wasn't working anymore. Harry figured that being back in Godric's Hollow had somehow triggered those memories again.

Harry didn't tell anyone about his nightly torture. He figured that there wasn't anything anyone could do so there was no point in complaining about it.

Lily had hoped that Harry would settle down, but things just seemed to get worse. He had no problem being in his room or spending time with Damien in Damien's room. But he refused to go to the attic or into the kitchen. He spent time in the living room if he had too. James and Lily started having all of their meals in the living room, as Harry wouldn't go into the kitchen even to have breakfast.

James and Lily didn't know about the nightmares but they saw the way Harry suffered everyday. They noticed the exhausted look Harry had that worsened everyday. James and Lily were sitting outside one evening, talking quietly about Harry.

"He's not really coping, is he?" Lily said sadly as she turned to look at James.

James sighed heavily. He knew that Harry was going to find it all very different and awkward but he never thought it would be this hard.

"Lily, I've been thinking about this. I think there really is only one option for us to fix this"

Lily sat up a little straighter, focusing her complete attention to her husband.

"I think we should move" James said quietly.

Lily didn't react at first. She stayed in her seat, trying to figure out if James was serious or not.

"Move? From Godric's Hollow?" she asked.

"Yeah. I've been thinking about it ever since Harry ran away from Voldemort. At first I didn't give it much thought. I had to get to Harry first. I figured that coming to live in Godric's Hollow might be difficult for him. But I had no idea that Harry would be affected as much as this. He doesn't look like he's getting much sleep at night, judging by the dark circles under his eyes. He can't look past his memories, and I don't blame him. I think the only way to resolve this is to leave Godric's Hollow"

Lily was staring at her husband, completely thrown by his suggestion.

"But...but you love Godric's Hollow" Lily said quietly to him.

James turned to look at the cottage before him. It was true. He had inherited this house from his parents. He had a special connection to it. It had been in the Potter family for generations. His eyes took in the cottage and he sighed heavily again.

Chapter Fifty Nine

James pulled his car over to stop in the driveway. He got out and watched with excitement as Harry and Damien climbed out of the car. He shared a quick glance with Lily and managed to hide his smile.

“How long is this going to take? I’m starving” Damien grumbled as he walked over to his dad.

“I just need to pick something up for work. Then we can go to get some dinner.” James said as he led his family to the front door.

Harry and Damien followed quietly, silently taking in the beautiful house before them. It was magnificent. It was painted white and had acres of land surrounding it. They approached the door and James knocked a few times on the door. When no one answered, he cautiously tried opening the door. The door opened and James walked inside, followed by Lily.

Harry thought it was a bizarre thing to just let yourself into someone else’s home but didn’t say anything. He was wondering why his dad had insisted on bringing all of them to visit this person, as they were on their way to have dinner at a restaurant. Harry was not too sure about going out in public so soon. He had purposefully avoided reading the Daily Prophet and all other news as he was sure it was full of nothing but his trial. He didn’t want to read what other people thought about it. He couldn’t care less. But he was bothered to think how others would react to him and more importantly how they would treat his family. Would they even be allowed in a restaurant? But Harry had been stuck at Godric’s Hollow for two weeks now. With his only refuge being his back garden, Harry was glad to go away from Godric’s Hollow even for a few hours. They had all been in the car when James said that he had to make one quick stop at someone’s home. Just for a minute to pick up a file of some sort. Harry would have happily stayed in the car but was told that he should come inside to say hello.

Harry walked inside the magnificent house and silently admired the house. It was decorated in a very contemporary fashion and had a very welcoming feel to it. They walked into, what Harry assumed was,

the living room and looked around for any sign of the person who lived here.

"Wow, this place is really something! Who lives here, dad?" Damien asked as he observed the expensive furniture around him.

James turned around to face Damien and held onto Lily's hand before speaking.

"We do"

Harry and Damien stopped looking around the room and stared at their parents. James's face broke out into a huge grin, which matched Lily's grin perfectly.

"Surprise!" both parents shouted with laughter.

Harry and Damien continued to stare at them, unable to say anything.

"We know that this may come to you as a shock, but your dad and I had been thinking and decided that we really needed a bigger place. We thought that with changing times, it was necessary to change our lifestyle as well" Lily said with a smile still plastered over her face.

Damien was standing in the room, with his mouth open with shock. Harry on the other hand seemed to stiffen a little at what Lily had said. 'Changing times' Harry knew what she was trying to say. He, Harry had come back into their lives and this changing of house was because of him. He was responsible for making them leave Godric's Hollow. He stood silently as James tried to explain.

"We just felt the Godric's Hollow was not big enough to suit us anymore. Your mum has always bugged me about having her own potions lab and this place has an underground lab already built in. There are five bedrooms, as opposed to only three, which means that Padfoot and Moony can stay over at Christmas and stuff. I have always wanted a place that had its own Quidditch pitch so that made this house a clear winner" James added with a grin.

"WHAT!" Damien erupted with glee.

“There’s a Quidditch pitch here! Oh my God!” Damien at once rushed over to the window to see if he could see the pitch, making both James and Lily laugh with joy. Harry however stood where he was, he didn’t move at all.

James looked at Harry’s reaction and seemed to deflate a little. Harry was looking at him with a strange look on his face. He could see that Harry was shocked but he seemed to be upset about something as well. James felt his heart hammer in his chest. He had done this for him, why was Harry not happy and excited like Damien was?

“I know that it’s all a bit sudden, but we just wanted to surprise you. Our stuff will be packed and brought by tonight. We’ll be going back to bring your stuff. We did most of our packing yesterday” James stopped talking as Harry tore his gaze away from him and looked away.

Damien came running back at James.

“I can’t believe this! We’re actually going to live here! This is so cool. I mean I love Godric’s Hollow and everything, but my own Quidditch pitch! Oh wait till I tell Ron”

James smiled over Damien’s reaction. He wanted to see Harry just as happy as well. He figured that maybe Harry was just shocked or maybe the house wasn’t as appealing to him as it was to Damien. But no, that couldn’t be it. He had seen Harry’s impressed expression as he walked into the house. His expression had darkened once they had told them that this was their new home.

“Which one is my bedroom?” Damien asked as he literally jumped on the spot with excitement.

“Well, we have the master bedroom. There is another master bedroom which we’re going to keep as a guest bedroom. There are three other bedrooms for you to choose from. Just decide among yourselves which room is yours.” Lily told him.

Damien rushed from the living room, grabbing Harry as he ran.

“Harry, come on” he said as he tried to pull Harry to come with him.

“You can choose whichever room you want, Damy” Harry said, still standing where he was.

“Harry, what’s wrong?” Damien asked as he realised that Harry was not at all excited.

Damien had spent enough time with Harry to be able to tell when Harry was upset and Harry looked like he was really troubled about something. Damien seemed to lose some of his excitement as he moved closer to Harry.

“Harry?” he asked again as Harry diverted his eyes from him.

“I’m fine, just go and choose your room. I need to speak to dad” Harry told him while fixing his dad with a cold look.

Damien let go of Harry’s hand and looked bewilderingly at his parents. Lily took the chance to leave. She led Damien away and moved upstairs to show him the rooms.

Once Lily and Damien had left, Harry cleared his throat.

“Now that Damien’s gone, do you want to tell me the real reason we’re moving” he asked his father.

James looked at Harry intently before answering.

“I told you why. We needed a bigger place so we’re moving here.”

Harry looked away again angrily. James was completely thrown by Harry’s reaction. He took a few steps closer to him and asked in a gentle voice.

“Harry, what’s wrong? I thought you would be just as excited as the rest of us to be moving into a new house”

Harry looked up at James.

“Are *you* excited at the prospect of leaving Godric’s Hollow?” he asked.

James hesitated in answering him and Harry looked away from him again.

“I thought so” he said quietly. He had made himself promise, his first night at Godric’s Hollow that he was not going to cause his parents anymore trouble. Yet somehow he had managed to rip them from their home, forcing them to live somewhere else. It was all his fault.

“Harry, I’m not going to lie to you. I do feel saddened at the thought of not living in Godric’s Hollow anymore, but at the same time I’m really looking forward to living here. Me and your mum were the ones who decided to move here. We made this decision so we’re obviously happy about it” James tried to convince him.

Harry looked sadly over at him, making James’s heart leap painfully.

“Don’t lie to me, dad. I know why you’ve made this decision. You didn’t want to leave Godric’s hollow. You were forced to leave because of me.”

“No, Harry. We weren’t forced to do anything. We left because, like I said, we needed more space. Plus, this house was offered to us that has everything we ever wanted so I thought it was a good opportunity” James answered a little forcefully now.

“So tell me, dad. If this house really has everything you wanted, how come you didn’t move before now? Why did you stay at Godric’s Hollow for sixteen, nearly seventeen years! Did you not want to move away then? How is it that you decided to move two weeks after I came back to you?” Harry asked heatedly. He was trying to hide his anger and hurt but it was coming out in his voice now.

James was starting to lose his patience as well. He had done all of this for Harry and it had all blown up in his face.

“I don’t understand why this is important! Why are you getting upset over nothing?” James asked, raising his voice unintentionally.

Harry moved away from him. Harry was trying desperately to hold onto his temper but it was seeping away from his control.

“Because it’s painfully obvious, dad, that you did this because you think that I’m too weak to live at Godric’s Hollow! Because you think that I couldn’t cope with living there, so you sacrificed your home because of me!”

“That’s not true! I don’t think you’re weak. I know that you were trying really hard to put everything behind you but it’s not your fault if it couldn’t be done. You memories were too horrific to deal with. A grown man couldn’t deal a past like that. How can I expect you to deal with it? I don’t blame you, Harry. I never have and I never will” James tried to convince him. He understood now that Harry felt responsible for them moving.

Harry was breathing heavily and tried not to say the words that were forming in his mind. But found that he couldn’t control his words anymore.

“How long will you refrain yourself from not blaming me? You can’t deny that ever since I came back, your life has been completely disrupted. Sooner or later, dad, you’ll regret me ever coming back to you” he said, his words laced heavily with hurt.

James had to pull on every last bit of patience that he had to stop himself from yelling at Harry. How could he even think something like that? After all the heartbreak James had gone through with losing Harry, his son was accusing him of such a thing.

He walked over to Harry as calmly as he could. He held onto Harry and forced him to look at him.

“Don’t ever say such a thing again. You coming back to me was the best thing that ever happened to me. I don’t want you even thinking such a thing. You’re my son, my first born. I can never regret you coming into my life”

Harry looked away from James, lowering his face so that James couldn’t see him.

“You want to know why we stayed at Godric’s Hollow for all those years? It was because of you, Harry. You were brought to Godric’s Hollow when you were only two weeks old. You said your first words

in Godric's Hollow. You took your first step there. The first time you rolled over, the first time you sat unaided, the first time you crawled over to me. All your memories were there and your mum and I couldn't bear to leave that place. That's all we had, Harry. Those few memories were all we had to get us through all those years away from you. That's why we didn't leave Godric's Hollow."

Harry refused to look at his dad. His heart ached from listening to his words.

"We never forgot you Harry. Not one day went by without us thinking about you." James said softly, urging his voice to stay strong.

"But now we don't need those memories anymore. We have you with us now. I want to see you happy and comfortable in your home. I want to see you relaxed and enjoying your time with us. I know that for reasons, beyond anyone's control, that's not possible at Godric's Hollow. So if me and your mum decided to move away to another house where all this is possible, what's wrong with that? We want to see our children happy and at ease."

Harry finally looked up at his dad, trying to make himself believe all his words. He saw the sincerity in his dad's hazel eyes and felt his heart lighten a little.

"You know that I...I tried, don't you? I really tried to make those memories go away but..." Harry was cut off by James.

"I know, Harry. I know. You don't have to give any explanations." James said as he put both hands on each of Harry's shoulders in a comforting manner.

Harry felt his heart lighten at hearing his father's words. They really didn't blame him. He moved away from James, feeling very foolish over his actions and words. He had completely ruined their first day in their new home.

James noticed Harry's red and embarrassed looking face.

"I think you should hurry along and choose your room before Damien decides to take over all of them." James said with a smile.

Harry laughed and looked over at the door.

“Yeah, suppose I should” he said.

He left the room to go upstairs and see the rest of their new house. He stopped at the door and looked back at James. Harry opened his mouth to say something but then changed his mind and left hurriedly from the room. James was left standing in the living room, hoping that from today, Harry would finally be able to live in peace.

XX

It was amazing how quickly everyone got used to living in the new Potter Manor. Lily felt like she had always lived here. Even though the house was much bigger than Godric’s Hollow, she felt she could manage it much better. Harry and Damien settled in really well and spent most of the day outside playing Quidditch. The wards that were placed on the house meant that the boys could fly around as much as they liked without fear of being attacked. The amount of free land they had around the house was perfect for them.

James had surprised Harry by showing him a specially built training ground for him. It was located near the back of the house and had everything Harry needed to work out. It had privacy spells put around it meaning that Harry could train in peace and not be spotted by anyone if he didn’t want to be seen. There were even a few rooms located in the training grounds, providing indoor training gear as well as shower rooms. The training ground wasn’t as big as the one Harry had with Voldemort but it was still his own private training place. Harry was speechless when James took him around the house to see it. He stood stock still, taking in the immense effort and trouble his parents had gone through to do this for him.

“You...you didn’t have to...” Harry had managed to stutter out, due to shock.

“Well, Dady got his Quidditch pitch, your mum got her private Potions lab so it was only fair you got what makes you really happy.” James answered with a smile. He had seen enough from Harry’s memories to know how attached Harry was to his training regime. It gave Harry

confidence, enhanced his duelling skills and seemed to be the only thing that exhilarated him.

Harry's face broke out in a huge grin as he surveyed the area. After a few minutes he turned to his dad and asked him.

"What about you? If all of us got something that makes us happy, what did you get that makes you happy?" Harry asked, with genuine curiosity.

James smiled at Harry's question. He took in Harry's beaming face and answered simply.

"I got the best thing of all. I got to see smiles on my children's faces."

xx

Harry had not suffered from anymore nightmares since he came to the Potter Manor. He was starting to feel comfortable with his new world and enjoyed the company of his family more and more as each day went by. He learnt new information about his family everyday. He learnt that his mum was a very good gardener and even helped her plant some new flowerbeds in their front garden. He learnt that his dad loved coaching them to play Quidditch. He would spend hours just discussing new tactics and flying methods with Damien and Harry. Damien was, well, just Damien. Harry would marvel at how he managed to get out of trouble with his parents and somehow would always end up winning any argument. He was actually very cunning. Harry found he could just sit back and watch his family interact and at times he would find himself longing to have grown up with them. He would shake away his hurt and felt he was lucky he had any chance to get to know them at all.

He still felt awkward about his trial. He had not seen Dumbledore since his trial and was honestly confused by the age old wizard. He was so sure that Dumbledore had only saved his life so that he could use him as a weapon against Voldemort. Harry knew that there was a prophesy made about a child that would defeat Voldemort, but he didn't know the prophesy in full detail. He didn't want to know it anyway. He was certain that he wasn't the *chosen one* as Dumbledore believed he was. Harry was certain that Dumbledore

was only giving him a few days to relax before he would be cornered by him. Harry figured that he would deal with Dumbledore when the need would arise. For now he was enjoying his new life with his family too much to care about anything else.

Harry made his way downstairs to the kitchen to have breakfast. Usually Harry was the last one to come down to breakfast but today, Harry walked in while it was only his mum there, busy preparing breakfast for everyone.

"Morning" Lily said cheerfully as Harry came over and sat at the table.

"Morning" Harry replied as he sat down.

It wasn't long before a very sleepy and disgruntled Damien walked into the kitchen. He sat down opposite Harry and yawned widely before propping himself up on his elbows.

"Morning, Damy" Lily said as she piled some bacon onto a plate for her sons.

"Gonmmong" came a barely audible reply.

Harry looked at the sleepy boy and leant over the table.

"What?" Harry asked, trying to decipher what Damien had said.

"He said 'Good Morning' to us" Lily answered for him as she playfully ruffled Damien's hair, which was looking just as messy as Harry's, for a change.

Harry raised his eyebrows at Damien and then turned to look at Lily.

"Damien's not a morning person" Lily whispered as she returned to the cooker to get the eggs.

"Oh" Harry smirked at Damien's half asleep form.

Harry was glad that he was always wide awake in the mornings. He would jump out of bed as soon as he woke up. He silently wondered who Damien took after. His question was answered instantly as a

very sleepy and equally disgruntled looking James walked in to the kitchen.

“Mo-orn-ning” James said while yawning.

Harry couldn’t help but laugh slightly at the sight. James flopped down next to Damien and both father and son looked like they could fall sleep at the table.

“Well, glad Harry took after me” Lily said as she sat a big plate of breakfast down in front of James.

Harry couldn’t agree more.

After their breakfast, this thankfully woke James and Damien up, Harry and Damien were informed that they were having a party later on that day.

“A party? What for” Damien asked.

“Well, it’s a house warming party. A lot of our friends haven’t seen the new house and we just thought a party would be nice, you know a nice way to see everyone again” Lily answered.

Harry had a bad feeling about this.

“Who’s coming?” he asked. He didn’t like the way his mum had said ‘everyone’.

“Just a few friends.” Lily said, without looking at Harry.

Harry’s suspicions were confirmed when that evening a whole crowd of people came by. Harry and Damien watched as their living room began to fill up with lots of people.

“Just a few friends. A few friends? Jeez mum. If this is a few I hate to see what a big party is like!” Harry rounded on his mum in the kitchen.

A flushed Lily answered.

“Well, I knew you would get all worked up if I told you exactly how many people were coming over! It’s not really all that bad. These are

our close friends. It would be nice if you got to meet them and be friends with them as well” she added with a puppy look in her eyes.

Harry just rolled his eyes at her and didn't say anything. He really didn't want to be friends with any of them. These very people were eager to kill him only a few short weeks ago. They had no idea what Harry was like so why should Harry waste time getting to know them. He however didn't say anything to his mum. He held his tongue and figured that if he somehow got through the night without any major problems that everything would be fine.

The entire Weasley family came over and Harry felt his heart skip a beat as he saw Ginny. She looked absolutely stunning in a white dress. Her red hair was pulled up in a pony tail. She was dressed casually but managed to look amazing.

Harry had spoken very briefly to Ginny after coming back from his trial. Both had avoided each other since their conversation at the Burrow had been fresh on their minds. Harry was still uncertain about what he should do about Ginny. He liked her. That much even she knew now but he didn't know if his situation was good enough to start dating her. He wasn't being hunted by the Aurors or the Order now, but Voldemort and his Death Eaters were still after him. They were after him more furiously since now they knew the truth about the Longbottoms. Harry was not convinced that he was any better off. He still had a very uncertain future. He didn't want Ginny to suffer on his account. But at the same time he felt more drawn to her, every time he looked at her.

Molly came over and gave Harry a loving look. She looked on the verge of hugging him but she managed to control herself.

“How have you been, Harry dear? Feeling better I hope” she asked him lovingly.

“Err, yes. I feel fine” Harry answered back rather confused. He didn't even know Mrs Weasley that well. Why would she care how he felt?

Ron came over and actually surprised Harry by punching him on the arm.

“Alright mate? How’ve you been doing?” he asked both brothers.

Harry grinned in response. Ron had finally overcome his fear of him and was acting like a proper friend.

Hermione came over as well as did a whole bunch of people that Harry didn’t recognise. The entire Order was here. Harry spotted Tonks and Moody and Kingsley making their way towards him and he quickly ducked out of view. He wasn’t ready to talk to any of them yet. Damien was just saying that he should show Ron and Hermione around the new house.

Harry quickly grabbed Ginny’s hand, as she was standing closest to him and said in a hurried voice.

“Yeah, yeah. That’s an idea. Let’s go!”

The five teens hurried out of the crowded room. Harry ignored most of the hello’s he was receiving. He didn’t know any of them, why should he waste time talking to them.

Harry realised that he was still holding Ginny’s hand as they walked upstairs. He let her go and refused to look at her. Soon Harry and the others had seen all the rooms and Damien was literally hoping on the spot, in anticipation of showing his friends the Quidditch pitch.

“The best thing about this house is yet to come! Come on, it’s right out here” Damien said as he led them outside.

“Blimey! A Quidditch pitch! That’s unreal. You have your own Quidditch pitch?” Ron asked, his voice getting louder with each word.

“Yeah! Can you believe it?” Damien answered, matching Ron’s voice with his own.

Hermione gave Harry and Ginny a defeated look. There was just no way to keep those two boys away from Quidditch. She hurried over to them as the two boys were running to the end of the pitch to look at the new brooms James had bought them.

Harry and Ginny were left alone for a few minutes. Wishing that he knew what to say, Harry looked over at the red haired girl. He gave himself a mental shake and spoke to her.

“Ginny, I had to say something to you.” he started.

Ginny turned around to look directly at Harry, her brown eyes never leaving Harry’s face.

“I, I wanted to...to thank you. You know for testifying before the Wizengamot. Thanks for that.” Harry had wanted to say that to her for a while now.

Ginny smiled. It was apparent that she had been expecting something else.

“You’re welcome, Harry. All I did was told the truth, it’s not really that hard” she finished with an odd gleam in her eyes. Harry looked away knowing that Ginny was trying to tell him to say the truth about how he felt about her.

Before Harry could say anything, the other three arrived back and the five teens turned to go back inside. Harry had just walked in when he saw someone that he had not been expecting at all. It was really naive of him though. Dumbledore was surely going to be here. If his entire Order was invited, then surely Dumbledore was invited as well. Harry looked at the wizard, dressed in dark green robes, smiling serenely at him from across the room.

Harry walked purposefully over to him. He wasn’t going to ruin his parent’s party, but at the same time he wasn’t going to let Dumbledore think that just because he had saved Harry from Azkaban, Harry was going to do anything he asked of him. Harry stood before Dumbledore, refusing to look away from him.

“Good evening, Mr Potter. I hope that you are well?” Dumbledore asked politely.

“I’m fine. I think we need to talk” Harry gestured to go into another room but Dumbledore stopped him.

“There is much need for us to sit and discuss many matters. But tonight is not the night. Your parents have put a lot of effort into tonight. I think it’s best if both of us enjoy this evening and leave our talk until another day” with that said Dumbledore left to go and see James and Lily, leaving Harry standing where he was.

Harry shook his head in confusion. There was no way anyone could understand that man. Harry had only taken a few steps when a cry was heard behind him.

“Lex! Lex! Lex!”

Harry spun around and saw a small brown haired child running through the front door and straight towards him. Harry felt his heart leap with joy as he gathered the small child in his arms. He hadn’t seen Nigel for months now. It was amazing how much he had grown. Nigel threw his arms around Harry and hugged him tightly.

“Lex, where were you? Me was looking for you” Nigel told him as he pulled away from Harry.

Harry was amazed at how clear his speech had become.

“I was right here, Nigel.” Harry told him. He found it cute that Nigel still called him ‘Lex’ when he could probably say the word ‘Alex’ now.

“Harry”

Harry turned around, with Nigel still in his arms and saw the confused faces of Damien, Ron, Hermione and Ginny.

Harry realised that although they had learnt that Neville had a baby brother, none of them had seen Nigel yet. At the thought of Neville, Harry turned around to see if he could spot him. He couldn’t see him anywhere.

“Harry, are you going to introduce us or not?” Damien’s voice pulled Harry away from his search for Neville. He smiled at Nigel and then looked at Damien.

“Damien, Ron, Hermione, Ginny. I would like you to meet Nigel. Nigel this is my brother, Damien and these are my friends” Harry said as Nigel shied away from the group of strangers.

“Hi, Nigel” the four teens said with huge smiles plastered over their faces.

“Lex, I have brother too.” Nigel told Harry. Harry raised his eyebrows.

‘Yeah, I know you do’ he said under his breath.

“Nigel, I think we should get to speak to Alex as well!”

Harry looked behind him and saw Frank and Alice standing there, Harry felt his stomach twist in knots at seeing them. He knew that he would have to face them and the truth about what he had done to them one day, but he hadn’t thought about how he was going to deal with it.

Harry lowered Nigel onto the floor and turned to look at the Longbottoms. Frank and Alice didn’t look angry or annoyed. But they weren’t smiling either. Feeling as if he was coming down with a fever, Harry walked over to them.

“A quick word, *Alex*” Frank said and Harry felt himself recoil in shame.

Nigel was quickly lifted up by Damien and taken over to see James and Lily as Harry walked out of the living room and into one of the guest bedrooms.

Harry closed the door after them and wished he didn’t have to deal with this. Slowly he turned around to see Frank and Alice standing, staring at him, their eyes never leaving Harry’s face.

“Okay, who wants to take the first shot?” Harry asked. He figured it was better to get this over and done with. Frank and Alice looked at each other, sly grins appearing on their faces.

“We don’t want to take a shot at you. We just thought that we should talk and get our feelings out in the open” Alice answered.

"If you have something to say, then say it" Harry said as annoyance took a hold of him.

"I think you owe us an explanation" Frank said quietly. A hard look in his eyes.

Harry felt the annoyance turn to anger as he heard the words come out of Frank's mouth.

"An explanation? I think everything that happened was pretty self explanatory. What is it you want me to say?"

"How about explaining what made you think you could decide our lives for us?" Frank asked, still keeping his eyes fixed on Harry.

Harry tried not to get upset. He had figured that Frank and Alice would be angry with him but he also thought that they would be able to understand Harry's actions.

"I didn't know what else to do. I was only fourteen years old and I had no idea how to deal with the situation. I did the best I could. I'm not sorry about what I did. It was the only way I could protect both myself and you. If I had to do it all again I would." Harry told them evenly.

Alice spoke up at this.

"Harry, no one blames you for what you did to save us. You are right. There really wasn't any other way to keep us hidden from You-Know-Who. But, Harry why didn't you give us our memory back once you left him? You should have restored our memory"

Harry couldn't explain why he didn't restore their memories. He couldn't explain that he did that to save them, to keep Nigel safe. He didn't think they would believe him anyway.

"Look, it doesn't matter now. There are a lot of things I should have done. There's no point in explaining everything." Harry said rather annoyed now. Why did they have to make Harry feel so stupid? He went through all the trouble of helping them and keeping them safe and they just turned around and blamed him for not restoring their memories.

"I think you've made your feelings perfectly clear. I know that you guys are good friends with my parents. And I understand how you feel about me, so I'll just keep away from you guys so you don't feel uncomfortable around me"

Harry turned to go after saying this but was stopped by a hand on his shoulder. He was turned around by Alice who was looking at Harry with a small smile.

"You know, Harry. When Dumbledore restored our memories, we were very angry with you. We had lost near enough three years of our life. We had left our son alone in the middle of a horrific war. We couldn't have hated you more"

Harry looked away from Alice, vaguely wondering how much more he could take before blowing up.

"But then we took one look at Nigel and we realised that whatever method you used, or whatever you did, you did it to save his life. We couldn't stay angry with you after that. We remembered how a young boy named 'Alex' had helped us and would come to see us to make sure we were okay. You didn't have to do that. You could have wiped our memories clean and throw us on the muggle streets to fend for ourselves. But you didn't. You set us up with John, gave us that trailer, which we now realise was magically enhanced to be big enough as a house. You kept in contact with us and would participate in the fights, only so that we would get enough money to live comfortably. How could we stay angry with you after all that?"

Alice had now tears shining in her eyes. She held onto Harry's hand and gave it a tight squeeze, making Harry look up at her.

"I want Harry to have the same relationship with Frank and Alice that Alex had with John and Fiona. Do you think that could happen?"

Harry felt his own heart twinge as he heard those words. He had missed John and Fiona immensely. He could do nothing else but nod his head in response.

“Good, now I think we should join the party before your dad breaks down the door looking for you” Frank laughed as he slapped Harry on the back playfully.

Harry realised that Frank and Alice had purposely made Harry think they were angry with him, just to punish him. He was too tired to tell them off instead he just shrugged it to the back of his mind. He opened his mouth to ask about Neville and how he felt about all of this but then decided not to. If Neville wasn't here, then that was enough to suggest that he didn't want anything to do with the Potters. Harry couldn't care less.

They joined the party and Frank and Alice went over to their group of friends. Harry joined his group of friends and they just talked about the new house and everything else that was going on. Harry was starting to get a headache. There were so many people in the room now. He had never spent so much time around so many people. He was aware of the glances being thrown towards him and he felt really unnerved by them. Couldn't they just mind their own business? After a while it was getting unbearable. Harry told the others he was going out for a while, just to get some fresh air. He quickly objected to them coming with him and explained that he needed a few minutes by himself.

He walked outside and sat down on the front steps. It had been a tiring night. His conversation with Frank and Alice had exhausted him. He wanted nothing more than to disappear into his bed. He tried to rub at his headache, willing it to go away. It was a tension headache and he knew it would only go away once he slept. He got up and thought about just sneaking up to his room. He had enough of this party.

He got up and turned to go back inside when a voice stopped him.

“What's the matter? Not enjoying your party”

Harry knew who it was before turning around. He turned around to face Neville. He was standing just a few steps away from him.

“Neville” Harry said as a greeting. He really couldn't be bothered by him tonight.

Neville didn't respond. He took a few steps nearer and stood before Harry, a hard look on his face.

"So, enjoying your *new life*, Potter?" he asked and Harry felt a surge of annoyance at him.

"What's it to do with you?" Harry asked, trying to grab at the last string of patience within him.

"I just find it amusing how someone who destroyed so many lives can enjoy his own without any remorse" Neville answered, now taking another step nearer.

Harry sighed and turned to leave.

"I don't have the time or the patience to deal with you Longbottom. So just leave" Harry said with his back turned on the boy.

"Time? Don't you dare talk about time with me, Potter. You took away three years of my life with my family. What do you have to say about that?" Neville spat at him.

Harry turned around to look at him.

"Nothing. I don't care about what you lost. You would have lost a hell of a lot more if it wasn't for me, so just shut your mouth!" Harry snapped back at him. He didn't want to say that to him. Harry hated to show that he had done anyone any favours but Neville was just pushing Harry now.

"So you think just because you didn't kill them, you deserve some sort of award? You're pathetic! You still took them away from me! I didn't even know that I had a brother! Do you know what that feels like? To realise that the past three years of your life was nothing but lies! To not even know that you have a brother, to not have been there to see him when he first came into this world! You have no idea the pain you've caused me"

Harry stood with his hand on the door. Emerald eyes shinning with hurt. His heart felt like it had been ripped apart.

“You’re right, Neville. I don’t have any idea what that must feel like. To live your life and then realise it was all lies. To not know you had a brother. Not to have grown up with him. To have been used again and again and not be aware of it. To be hurt like you have. What do I know about losing family?”

Harry stopped talking as he saw the look of confusion on Neville’s face. Harry realised that not everyone knew about what Harry’s life had been like. Not everyone knew that Voldemort had lied to him and brought him up hating his parents. But at this point Harry didn’t care. Neville couldn’t blame him for something like this. Harry was not like Voldemort. He didn’t hurt another like Voldemort had hurt him. Harry refused to believe it.

“At least you got to be with your family after three years. Try fifteen years! At least you grew up being loved by your parents. You only had happy memories of them. You weren’t haunted by them!” Harry wanted to stop talking but it was like something inside him just wanted to get rid of everything bottled up inside.

“Humph! If you had it your way I would never have seen my parents again. You didn’t even tell anyone about them when you were standing trial! If I got them back its no thanks to you!” Neville spat at Harry.

Harry had now had enough. If he didn’t leave he would end up breaking Neville’s neck. But before Harry could move, Neville had approached him. He had come to stand between Harry and the door, blocking Harry.

“It’s not really your fault though, is it? This is just what you have been brought up to do. Disrupt others lives. Torture as many as you can. You get some sort of sick pleasure from making others suffer, don’t you?” Neville was so lost in his rage that he wasn’t even aware of half the things he was saying.

“I shouldn’t be surprised that you tried to hide my parents. You probably got some deep satisfaction knowing that they were your prisoners while the wizarding world mourned their death”

“Shut up, Longbottom!” Harry shouted, trying his best not to hit him but Neville kept on talking.

“I don’t believe for a second what Dumbledore said about you at the trial. You’re not a normal wizard. You didn’t try and destroy Voldemort! You’re not an innocent boy who was trapped by Voldemort. No one is that stupid, not to see that they were being used. You wanted to be used by Voldemort. That’s why you stuck by him for so long. If you hated killing and torturing others then why the hell did you do it for so long? You enjoyed being the Dark Prince! You enjoyed killing others and you damn well enjoyed torturing my parents and you would have hurt Nigel as well if...”

Neville was cut off as Harry’s hand shot out and grabbed him by the neck. Neville tried to whip out his wand but Harry had grabbed his hand as well, rendering him defenceless. Neville was stunned at how strong Harry’s grip was. He was gasping for breath as Harry pulled him closer, rage was shining in Harry’s eyes and Neville was sure Harry was going to kill him.

“Just because I spared your pathetic life once before, doesn’t mean I’ll always refrain myself from breaking your neck! You don’t know shit about me! Keep your mouth shut and I won’t have to go through the trouble of shutting it for you!” Harry hissed at him.

Neville let out a moan of pain as Harry’s grip on his wrist had ended up snapping it. Neville was spluttering and had started to turn blue before Harry let go of him with such force that Neville ended up on the ground, gasping for breath.

Harry moved away from the boy on the ground and stormed his way into the house. As soon as he came inside he saw his mum and Alice waking towards the door. She stopped and looked at Harry’s angry face.

“Harry” Lily started but stopped talking as Alice let out a small ‘oh’. She had seen Neville struggling back to his feet holding his broken wrist tenderly. Both of them rushed outside to help him.

Harry ignored them and raced to his room, bolting it shut. He knew another moment with Neville would have resulted in his death.

Feeling anger and rage pulse through him, Harry tore off his party clothes and threw on his robes. He needed to go from here, just for a few hours to calm down before anyone spoke to him.

With that thought in his mind, Harry threw open the window and climbed outside. He was gone by the time James had raced to his room to find out what had happened between him and Neville.

James stood in the empty room, heart thumping wildly at the thought of Harry disappearing once again.

[illegible]

Chapter Sixty

James rushed downstairs, all the while willing himself to stay calm. He knew that Harry was more than capable of looking after himself, but that didn't stop horrible thoughts coming to mind about what Death Eaters could do to him. He rushed into the kitchen to find Lily, Sirius and Remus standing, huddled together, looking very upset. Dumbledore, Moody, Arthur, Molly and Tonks were standing a few steps away from them. The Longbottoms had just left, and along with them, left most of their guests. It was an awful end to such a perfect night. James rushed towards Lily, trying to keep his voice steady.

"Harry's gone" he managed to say to them before losing his nerve.

Lily's eyes widened with shock as she digested her husbands words.

"He's not in his room. I can't find him anywhere. He's left the Manor!" James said now in a panicked voice.

Dumbledore and the rest of the Order members quickly joined the small group after hearing James's panicked voice.

"Alright, let's not panic. The boy can hold his ground. We all know that!" Moody told them in his gruff voice.

"All we have to do is spread out and look for him. He won't have gone that far. Even he knows it's not safe" he continued.

James bit his lip in worry. Harry wasn't really one to think that rationally when in a temper. He kept on berating himself for not telling Harry that he was to stay inside Potter Manor at all times. Not that it would have stopped Harry.

James purposefully looked away from Dumbledore. He knew that the exceptionally powerful wizard would be able to tell that James had not acted on his orders for informing Harry to stay inside the Manor. James didn't really have the time to worry about that now. He just had to get Harry back to safety, before anything bad happened.

The group all left to look for Harry. Molly took Ron, Ginny and Hermione back to the Burrow. The four teens looked quite upset with

what had happened. They all silently blamed Neville. They knew that he must have said something to Harry that made him lash out like that and then leave the Manor.

Damien quickly took out his mobile and tried phoning Harry, but Harry's phone seemed to be switched off. Lily directed a questioning look at the phone but decided not to ask about it. She didn't think she could handle any more stress. They searched the Manor again and even went outside, on the grounds to look for Harry. They called for him again and again, but there was no answer. Lily and Damien came back inside and miserably sat in the living room. Damien kept on trying to reach Harry on his phone but was having no luck.

"Come on, Harry! Pick up the damn phone" Damien said in frustration as he dialled his number and held his breath in anticipation of Harry answering. But Harry never answered and the same message was played over and over again, that the phone may be switched off and to try later.

Damien and Lily refused to go to bed. They were both exhausted from their hectic evening, but couldn't sleep without knowing where Harry was. Both sat in silence at the table, each lost in their own disturbing thoughts.

It was in the early hours of the morning that James and Sirius came back from their search. They had been looking for Harry for six hours now. Both men were exhausted and collapsed onto the sofa as soon as they entered the room. Lily and Damien were still awake and at once rushed to them.

Lily was about to ask whether they found Harry or not, but it was painfully obvious that they hadn't found him as both men had come inside the Manor without Harry and had looks of worry lined on their faces.

Lily knelt next to James, looking into his tired eyes.

"We looked everywhere. The rest are still looking for him. I had to bring him home to rest for a bit. He wouldn't come easily though" Sirius said as he eyed James.

James looked lost. He sat with his head bowed and seemed to be lost for words. He couldn't even look Lily in the eyes. He kept on thinking about what he would do if he lost Harry. How would he face Lily? How would he keep Damien safe if he failed to protect Harry?

Sirius was talking to Lily and Damien while James sat in complete silence. He wasn't even taking in any words that were being spoken around him. He wondered angrily what had happened between Harry and Neville that had resulted in Harry acting so violently and then storming off like that. In any case, Harry should have had more sense than to leave the Manor at night, without telling anyone. It was just asking for trouble.

A sound in the hallway caught everyone's attention and they instantly stopped talking and strained their ears to pick up any other sounds. When they heard the front door being closed and the sound of feet walking down the hall, the four rushed to the door to see who it was.

James was the first to throw open the door and stumble into the hallway. He felt immense relief wash over him as he caught sight of Harry standing in the hallway. Harry had stopped in his tracks as he saw the four people rush out of the room in such a hurry. He looked at them curiously, wondering why Damien was still up at four in the morning.

James felt his knees weaken with relief at the sight of Harry standing there, completely unhurt with a strange look on his face. He looked tired and still had some annoyance and anger lurking in his green orbs. At once James felt his relief turn into anger. How could Harry just leave like that? Didn't he realise how worried everyone was going to get?

Harry looked away from them and headed for the stairs to go to his room. He wasn't in any mood to talk to anyone.

"Where did you go?" Lily asked, her voice shaking with emotion.

"Out" Harry answered, without looking at her.

That seemed to bring James out of his stunned silence.

“Out? That’s all you have to say? You went out? You didn’t think it was necessary to tell someone before leaving like that?” James asked as his temper got a hold of him.

Harry stopped at the foot of the stairs and turned around to look at him.

“No” he answered simply.

James moved towards Harry but Sirius was quick to grab his arm.

“Prongs don’t. He’s safe and he’s home. You should be thankful” he whispered to him.

James didn’t say anything but shook his arm out of Sirius’s grasp.

Damien quickly joined his brother at the stairs.

“Why did you not say anything before going out?” Damien asked.

“Because everyone was too distracted with the party, so I figured that no one will notice where I am” Harry answered emotionlessly.

“Of course we would notice! Don’t make this out to be like we were ignoring you, Harry, because you know that’s not true” Lily said as she too came to stand before Harry.

Harry didn’t respond and instead turned to walk away. He was too tired to deal with anyone.

“Harry…” Lily started but was cut off.

“Can’t we do this in the morning” Harry asked in an exasperated voice.

“No, we can’t. You have to at least explain why you hurt Neville” Lily said.

Harry didn’t say anything but his eyes flashed dangerously. He looked away and tried to calm himself.

“It’s not important” he answered.

“Not important! Harry, you broke his wrist! You hurt him when he was a guest at our house. There must have been a reason!” Lily practically yelled at him.

Harry had now had enough. He was cold, tired and just fed up with everything that had happened.

“Maybe you should have asked him what happened! I’m sure he would have happily repeated all that nonsense! But don’t yell at me! It wasn’t my fault tonight was a disaster!” Harry yelled back.

James came and stood between Lily and Harry. He could see the situation getting out of hand. Lily had a worse temper than the rest and Harry was going to regret getting on the wrong side of her.

“Lily, calm down.” he whispered to her. Lily shut her eyes and took a deep breath to calm down. James turned his attention to Harry.

“Harry, I don’t care why you hurt Neville. There is nothing that could have happened that justifies that sort of behaviour. And to make matters worse, you stormed out of here without even thinking about the consequences. Do you know what has gone through our minds these last six hours? All the horrifying thoughts that entered our minds! Do you realise that half of the Order is still outside looking for you?” James told him.

Harry seemed to lose whatever patience he had at this point.

“I can look after myself! I don’t need your *Order* to do anything for me. I managed to survive the last fifteen years without them, I’ll manage now as well. I don’t need anyone going looking for me! Besides, you guys didn’t go out looking for me when you should have. Why bother now!” Harry spat at James, his green eyes burning with anger.

James and Harry stood silently looking at each other, both refusing to look away. James could clearly hear the accusation directed at him in that statement. Harry was blaming his parents for not being there for him all those years ago. It was apparent that a part of Harry blamed his parents for not looking for him when he was taken to Voldemort. James tried to bite back the anger and hurt that he felt as he spoke to Harry.

“Don’t throw that in my face, Harry. We already explained what the situation was when you were taken all those years ago. No one had any idea that you had survived. We would have torn this world apart looking for you if we knew you were still alive!” James told him while trying to steady his shaking hands.

Harry tore his gaze away and looked angrily at the floor. Before James could say anything more Sirius stepped up.

“Prongs mate. I think we’ve all had enough. Harry’s home now, he’s safe. I’ll go let everyone know that he’s back. You all should give each other a break as well.” Sirius said as he neared the door.

He stopped before leaving and turned to look at Harry.

“Just out of curiosity, where did you go?” he asked.

Harry looked up at him with tired eyes.

“Nowhere, I was in the training grounds” he answered.

Sirius stood with his hand still on the door. He was staring at Harry with his mouth hanging open. Even James and Lily were looking at Harry in shock.

“So, all this time we were going crazy looking for you, you were in your own back yard?” Sirius asked.

“Yeah” Harry answered back.

“Oh, well. Next time we have a starting point to look for you” Sirius said as he met James’s eyes. James looked away. He knew installing that privacy spell on the training grounds was a bad idea.

“But, Harry. Me and mum were calling for you. Didn’t you hear us?” Damien asked as he recovered from the shock of where Harry was as well.

“I did. But I wasn’t in the mood to talk to anyone” Harry answered.

“And I’m not in the mood now either, so if both of you have quite finished yelling at me, I’m going to bed” Harry said to his parents and left both standing at the foot of the stairs.

James and Lily decided not to go after Harry. They would settle this in the morning. They went to bed as well, feeling like they had made the worst mistake ever by throwing this party. Harry was obviously not ready to meet all of their friends. They knew that Harry had grown up in near isolation. Voldemort had only let two of his Death Eaters near Harry. Lucius and Bella. The only child Harry had ever spoken to was Draco Malfoy. That’s why they had wanted to show Harry that he had a large group of friends. That he wasn’t restricted to only a few people to talk to. They hadn’t realised that Harry would become so overwhelmed. They both decided not to ask him about Neville. It was obviously something that bothered him greatly so both parents decided not to push him into explaining himself until Harry calmed down. The thing that James was more concerned about was the way Harry had reacted to the Order looking for him. James knew that Harry blamed his parents for not looking for him when he was a baby. They were the reason Harry grew up with Voldemort. Even James blamed himself for not looking for Harry. He decided to have a serious talk with Harry in the morning regarding this.

xxx

Damien had snuck into Harry’s room later that night. Harry was awake and had calmed down after talking to Damien. He told Damien what had happened with Neville. Damien was lost for words by the end of it all.

“That jerk! I can’t believe he would say something like that to you. I’m going to kick his ass next time I see him!” he told Harry.

Harry smiled despite himself.

“Yeah, that’ll teach him, Dami” he said causing Damien to punch Harry in defence.

“I’ll have you know that I can throw a good punch or two. Not as good as you though” Damien told a laughing Harry. He went silent as he thought about something.

“Harry, I wanted to ask you this before. I know that you hate teaching others and everything, but I was wondering. Could you teach me how to fight?” he asked hopefully.

“You already know how to fight” Harry joked as he rubbed his stomach where Damien had punched him.

“I’m serious! I want to know how to fight like you. You know the muggle way. I think it’s really cool”

Harry pretended to think it over.

“I don’t know, Damy. I mean it’s the only thing that makes me so special. If I teach you, you’ll be on the same level as me. I don’t think I want that” Harry told him.

Damien raised an eyebrow and gave Harry a sarcastic look.

“Well, you have to have something special. You won’t get very far in life with your looks alone. I guess you need this muggle fighting thing” Damien laughed as Harry threw a book at him. It hit Damien on the head and both boys were laughing heartily.

“Come on, Harry. Seriously, will you teach me? You have that awesome training ground. I think it’s only fair that you share it with me, as I let you play on my Quidditch pitch”

“Who said it was yours?” Harry asked as he eyed Damien.

“I know it’s mine. I don’t have to have someone tell me specifically. So what do you think? Will you teach me?” Damien asked again.

Harry couldn’t think of any reason why he shouldn’t. He told Damien that he would teach him but only if he left him alone to go to sleep now. Damien agreed and enthusiastically left to go to his room. Harry rolled over and let his tired body and mind relax. He had managed to forget about Neville and his hurtful words by talking to Damien. He felt grateful for having Damien to talk to. He couldn’t help thinking how lost he would be without his snotty nosed, spoiled brat of a brother. Harry smiled as he drifted off to his much needed sleep.

xxx

Harry kept quiet throughout breakfast the next morning. He could actually feel the tension hanging in the air as he sat with his mum and dad. He knew that they were still annoyed with him about last night. Harry was determined not to bring up the subject. His mum and dad were talking to him but there was an awkwardness there that Harry found immensely annoying.

At last his dad brought up the subject as they got up from the table.

"I wanted to have a quick word with you about last night" he said in a tired voice.

Harry followed him and his mum to the living room. Damien looked awkwardly at them before announcing that he was going to his room until the 'madness' was over. He left quickly before anyone could stop him.

"Okay, what did you want to add to last night" Harry asked.

He knew that they had a right to be angry with him for what he did to Neville. That had to be embarrassing to deal with in the midst of a party. But as much as Harry wanted he couldn't care less. They should have thought about this when they planned the party. They hadn't even discussed anything with him.

"About last night..." Lily started with a glance over at James.

"...I wanted to say sorry for yelling at you. I was so worried about you and I didn't quite handle my emotions that well. But Harry, you should understand what we were going through as well. You don't know what we went through when we saw that you were...were missing" Lily said with a very haunted look in her eyes.

Harry immediately felt guilty for upsetting her like that. He didn't mean for her to be reminded of that night nearly sixteen years ago, when he was taken by Wormtail. He looked at his mum's shaking hands and felt his anger ebb away.

"I didn't mean for you to get upset. I just needed to get out for a while. That's just me. When I feel upset or just angry, I need to go out into the open. It's the only way I can calm down." Harry explained.

"What's done is done. I'm not going to ask you what happened between you and Neville last night, since I know you won't want to talk about it. I just want you to understand that your behaviour was not acceptable" James said, hating how strict he sounded.

Harry looked at him with annoyance.

"You don't have to talk to me like I'm a five year old! I know exactly what my behaviour should be like. You don't have to tell me"

James looked like he was going to argue, but instead he sat down on the sofa and looked resignedly at Harry.

"I know you're not a child. But I have to say things like this, especially after you hurt guests that come over. But I don't want to get into that just now. What I'm more concerned about right now is your safety." James watched as Harry tried not to pull a face.

"Harry, I know you can look after yourself but you know as well as I do how dangerous it is for you to go out of the Manor. I don't have to tell you what could happen" James said, watching Harry get more and more worked up.

"You're right, you don't have to tell me" Harry answered angrily.

James let out a deep sigh. Things weren't going to plan. Harry was getting upset with him.

"Harry, I'm not arguing with you. I don't want you to get upset with me. You know as well as I do that if things were up to me, you would have no restrictions on you of any kind. But things aren't under my control."

Harry seemed to soften at hearing those words. He came and sat down as well, looking at the floor as he spoke.

"I know." He replied softly to him

“It’s just...it feels like a huge insult to me when I think about who it is that’s still after me. After all I grew up amongst them. It just feels really...weird, almost hurtful” Harry finished awkwardly.

Lily looked at James with a horrified look. They hadn’t thought about it like that. They hadn’t quite understood what Harry was going through with Voldemort and his Death Eaters after him. They had been too consumed with their own issues.

“I know that it’s difficult to deal with, but with time it will get better. Until things calm down a little, I think its best for you to not go outside alone” James said in his most comforting voice.

Harry didn’t react right away. He slowly looked up to face James.

“I know that you’re afraid and I understand that. But I’m not going hide like a scared little mouse. I can look after myself and you know that. There is no way I’m going to stay like a prisoner in my own home.” Harry replied.

James and Lily both had defeated looks on their faces. They knew that this was how Harry was going to react.

“If you want to go out, that’s fine. I’m not saying that you have to stay inside at all times. All I’m saying is that you should take someone with you. Just don’t go out alone. That’s all I’m saying” James responded, hoping that Harry would just agree.

Harry instead shook his head and laughed.

“You want me to go out with bodyguards! You really think that would help if I’m attacked. Merlin, your bodyguards would probably just get in the way and cause more problems”

“Harry...” Lily started but was cut off.

“Look, I’m not discussing this with you. I’m not a kid so don’t treat me like one. I have been risking my life since the age of fourteen. Every time I was sent on an assignment I was facing danger. I know how to look after myself. So just drop this, okay”

With that, Harry got up and left the room, leaving both James and Lily feeling more anxious about his safety than before.

xxx

Harry wasn't ready to listen to anymore lectures regarding his safety so James and Lily had no option than to leave it for the time being. Harry spent the next day or two outside with Damien as he was learning self defence from him. Things were gradually getting better. Harry seemed to be in a good mood as he taught Damien. But his good mood vanished when he was called in to speak to Dumbledore. It seemed that Dumbledore had just dropped by, on his own, and had requested a quick word with Harry.

Harry had a fairly good idea why Dumbledore wanted to speak to him. He had been left alone for a few weeks now. Dumbledore had probably thought it was time to talk Harry into helping them catch Voldemort. Sure enough, Dumbledore brought up the subject almost instantly.

"I know that you have very strong feelings against the Ministry, Harry. I don't blame you entirely. They have been very rough with you and unyielding in their investigations regarding you. But you do realise the potential help you can offer to the Order. If you would be willing to help us, we might be able to capture Voldemort" Dumbledore told him in his usual calm voice.

Harry was standing a few paces away from him. He had refused to sit with him and wanted to show clearly that he didn't want to spend anymore time than he had to in his company. James and Lily were sitting next to Dumbledore and had remained quiet throughout the conversation.

"And why do you think that I would want to offer my help" Harry asked as calmly as he could.

"I want you to understand something, Dumbledore. I know that I would never have been freed from the Ministry without you. I understand that now I have a life debt to you. You saved me even after everything that happened at Hogwarts. Don't think that I'm

ungrateful to you because I'm not." Harry saw the small smile spread on Dumbledore's lips at his words.

"But that doesn't mean that I'll do whatever you ask of me. It doesn't mean that I'll help you or your Order or the Ministry to capture *anyone*. It doesn't work like that" Harry came a few steps closer to Dumbledore's sitting form.

"I won't be used as a pawn, Dumbledore. I refused to be used by Voldemort and I won't be used by you either. I think as far as this war goes, I've done more than my share. The Horcruxes are destroyed. If you want Voldemort then you can go after him yourself. Leave me out of this!"

Harry turned to go but was stopped by Dumbledore's voice.

"I will leave you out of this, Harry, if that is what you wish. But I don't think Voldemort will leave you out of this war. How will you deal with that" Dumbledore didn't want to scare Harry, but it was important Harry realised that he was a part of this war, whether he wanted to be or not.

"I don't think that is your concern. I will deal with that myself. I'll keep out of his way" Harry said inattentively.

Dumbledore gave Harry a sad smile.

"My boy, if only it was as easy as that. I know that you won't believe me, but I have to tell you this nevertheless. You know of the Prophecy, don't you?" as Dumbledore said this, Harry noticed the colour drain out of James and Lily's faces.

Harry nodded his head in response.

"I do, and I also know what you think. That I'm the prophesised one. But I think that I will have to side with the Minister on this one. Probably the only thing that Fudge and I will ever agree on. The Prophecy is rubbish!" Harry said before anyone could interrupt.

"Harry, I know that things like prophecies can be hard to believe, and there is nothing I can do to convince you. All I can say is that as the

Prophecy dictates, if you don't kill Voldemort then he will kill you, one way or another" Dumbledore finished sadly.

James and Lily both looked at Harry for his reaction. They knew that Dumbledore was hinting that if Voldemort didn't kill Harry himself, then the pain in Harry's scar will eventually kill him. They were expecting Harry to blow up and start yelling at Dumbledore, or to simply storm out of the room. But they were shocked to see the smile spread on his lips as he stared at Dumbledore.

"You mean my scar" he asked simply.

The three adults stared at Harry in shock. They didn't know that Harry knew about the scar possibly resulting in his death. They didn't respond and just stared wide eyed at Harry.

"I heard you that day in the Infirmary when you were telling mum and dad. I have very good hearing" Harry joked.

"How...how can you be so calm about this?" Lily asked fearfully.

"Because, mum. I don't believe it. I didn't believe it then and I don't believe it now. 'Neither can live while the other survives' that's what it says, doesn't it. Well me and Voldemort have survived together for nearly seventeen years now! I don't see the prophecy as anything other than utter nonsense." Harry replied.

"Then how do you explain Voldemort's belief in the prophecy. He believed it to the point that he tried to kill you when you were only a baby. If he believes it then don't you think that there may be some sort of truth behind it" Dumbledore asked.

"It doesn't matter if he believes it. The point is that I don't" with that, Harry turned to leave the room. Dumbledore called on Harry to try and make him understand the severity of the prophecy.

"Don't bother trying to convince me. It's never going to happen. I'm not your saviour, Dumbledore. No matter what you said at the Wizengamot, I'm not the one who will fight for you and bring around the end of Voldemort. No matter what happens, I will **never** raise my wand at Voldemort."

Harry left the room, leaving the three adults to their own depressing thoughts.

xxx

James and Lily didn't bring up the subject of the prophecy again. They knew that it would achieve nothing other than making Harry argue with them. James was inwardly glad that Harry had refused to join Dumbledore. He always felt that Harry should be kept out of the war and as away from Voldemort as possible. If James had a chance to bring Harry up, he would have kept him away from the Order and the war as much as possible. Similar to the way he had brought up Damien. In James's eyes, if anyone deserved to be kept away from war, it was Harry.

James was sitting with Remus, Sirius and Lily in the main living room, in deep discussion about a subject that was highly enjoyable. Harry's approaching seventeenth birthday.

"Okay, so what's the theme going to be?" Sirius asked as they discussed the many different options.

"We can sort that out later, we have to finalise the guest list" Lily said in a flustered voice.

"Well, let's keep it to a minimum. We don't want to have casualties again" Sirius joked.

"I think that we should settle on the location first" Remus said as held up the small book listing all the suitable venues.

"Yeah, we have to sort that out first." Lily agreed.

"Any place will do as long as they do the catering as well. The food has to be the most important thing" Sirius added in.

"Can you think of anything other than food?" Lily reprimanded him.

Sirius smiled and shook his head.

"Nope!" he laughed.

Their laughter was cut short as the fireplace erupted in green flames and Moody stepped through the room.

“Guys! We have a situation! Hogsmeade is under attack” he said quickly.

At once James, Remus and Sirius jumped to their feet.

“We just got a distress call! I came to get you on the way. We have to go now”

The four Aurors left hurriedly, leaving Lily by herself, praying for everyone to stay safe.

When James and the others arrived at the scene it was disastrous. There were flames everywhere, the people of Hogsmeade were running to the safety of their homes. Shops, restaurants and various other buildings were set alight and the Death Eaters were torturing and killing the innocent people as they ran from the burning buildings.

James and the other Aurors leapt into action, taking down as many Death Eaters as they could. The fight was an intense one and at many times, James nearly fell into the pools of fire as the Death Eaters ganged up and duelled two to one.

James was busy duelling fiercely and didn't realise where he was going. He just took down two Death Eaters and turned the corner to fight more when a sight made him stop in his tracks.

In front of him was a clearing, made by blasting the surrounding houses away. The rubble of the destroyed houses littered the ground and there was an eerie calmness there. There were no flames, no screaming people. It was deathly silent. The shouts of the curses behind him seemed to fade away as James saw the sight before him. His breath hitched in his chest as he saw the horrifying sight.

Before him was a conjured platform. It was raised and had at least twenty stairs leading upwards. At the top of this platform was a black marble tomb. It was gleaming in the moonlight and seemed to chill you to the bone by just looking at it. But that wasn't what made James take a step back in shock and fear. It was the black headstone

with silver writing that shone so brightly that James could clearly read it at a distance. The words seemed to be burned into James's mind as he saw them. *Harry James Potter*.

James felt sick as he took in the tomb standing before him. He heard gasps behind him and turned around to see Moody, Sirius, Remus and Arthur join him. They too stood, transfixed in horror, staring at the sight before them. No one could find their voice to say anything. It was such an awful sight. At last, Remus moved forward and placed a hand on James's shoulder.

"James, it's not real. Harry's safe. It's just an empty tomb and it will stay that way" he tried to comfort his friend.

"I would have to disagree with that" a cold voice rang out around them.

At once the Aurors shot their wands out before them and tried to squint in the darkness to see who was standing before them. A cloud of black rose before them, just at the foot of the stairs. Suddenly tall, cloaked figures appeared before them. There must have been around thirty Death Eaters standing before them. But James was concentrating on the tall figure standing at the forefront. His red gleaming eyes shone like fire through the hooded cloak.

Slowly Voldemort lowered his hood so that the Aurors could see him. No one had shot any curses but were pointing their wands at each other, barely holding them still due to rage and nerves.

"What do you think about my little gift, Potter? I thought it was fitting for him, don't you?" Voldemort said in his high pitched cold voice.

James tried to hold his wand steady and aim at Voldemort, but was finding his shaking hands and racing heart wasn't helping him at all.

"I made all these arrangements so that I could personally show you this. I thought you would like to see it before the rest." Voldemort continued in his sickly calm voice.

"You can keep on dreaming, you will never get near Harry again!" James shouted at him in rage.

Voldemort smirked, making James shudder.

“I got to him once before. What’s going to stop me this time?”

A curse flew from behind James but it didn’t touch Voldemort. He brought up his full body shield and deflected it. Again James felt sick at how similar he was to Harry.

“Don’t be foolish. Try that again, and my Death Eaters will blast you all into smithereens” he said in menace.

“I could just kill you all now and be done with it, but I want to see your faces when I exact my revenge. I want to see the hope diminish from your eyes as I kill your *saviour!*” Voldemort said and his voice rose as his anger shone through. He looked directly at James.

“You will regret the day you took him from me! If you had left him alone, he would have lived. But your meddling ruined everything. You took him away, remember that when you mourn over him. You will be responsible for his death!” Voldemort told James

Before James could send a curse at him, one of the Death Eaters reacted and sent a stinging hex at James, causing his wand holding hand to be cut open. James dropped his wand and hissed in agony as his hand started bleeding. He looked at Voldemort, wanting nothing more than to rip him apart.

“The people of Hogsmeade will bear witness to the revenge of the Dark Lord. They will see what happens to those who betray me” Voldemort announced in a loud voice so that the people hiding in their homes could hear.

“I will drag your son here, and bury him alive!” Voldemort hissed in a chilling voice, eyes burning with rage.

“Everyone will hear his dying screams and there will be nothing you can do to help him. You will watch his death helplessly and the only one you can blame is yourself!” Voldemort told him.

At once many jets of light made their way towards Voldemort. Everyone, including James had shot curses at him. James had

grabbed his wand from the ground and sent a curse flying at him from his uninjured hand. Before any of them could reach the Dark wizard, he and his surrounding Death Eaters vanished before them. The sound of Voldemort's cold laughter rang in the air before fading away.

James and the others, including Dumbledore, tried to get to the tomb to destroy it, but it seemed that there was an invisible wall around it, not allowing anyone to get near it. The name, *Harry James Potter* shone brightly, almost taunting James as he tried desperately to destroy the tomb.

They had to admit defeat and leave as James was injured and so were the others. James had to be dragged away by Sirius and Remus as he wouldn't take his eyes away from the black marble tomb.

“It won’t happen, Prongs. We’re not going to let anyone come near Harry. We will destroy Voldemort before he can as much as look at Harry” Sirius told him and Remus said similar things to him as they walked slowly back.

James didn't respond. There was only one thing ringing in his ears. The words that had made his blood run cold.

"I got to him once before. What's going to stop me this time?"

[illegible]

Chapter Sixty One

It was very late in the night, by the time James returned to Potter Manor, Harry and Damien had gone to bed. Lily was still up, waiting anxiously for James to return. Lily had told her sons that James had gone to see the Weasleys regarding Order matters. She knew her sons, especially Harry, would fret over James going to fight against Death Eaters. James told Lily about the black tomb and about Voldemort's threat. Lily sat in shocked silence listening to James, growing more and more fearful. By the end of it, both parents were sitting in terrified silence. At last Lily cleared her throat.

"It...it won't h-happen. He-he can't do anything to Harry! We won't let it happen!" Lily said in a voice that was reassuring herself more than James.

James didn't respond. He couldn't help but think about all the possibilities of Voldemort fulfilling his threat. For one, Harry refused to stay inside Potter Manor. He point blank refused to have bodyguards with him when he did go out. That put Harry at risk right away and James didn't even want to contemplate the dirty tricks Voldemort could pull to draw Harry out of safety.

James rubbed at his temples as he felt the horrid headache pounding at him. He wanted nothing more than to crawl into bed and forget this ever happened. But he couldn't. He couldn't forget the image of the eerie black, marble tomb, waiting there with Harry's name on it. He took off his glasses and rubbed at his eyes, willing himself not to break down.

Lily tried to comfort him. It was easier for Lily, she hadn't seen the tomb. She hadn't seen her son's name, glistening on the headstone, she hadn't heard the threat Voldemort had made against Harry. She hadn't seen the fire burning in those ruby red eyes as he swore to take revenge. It was James who had seen all of that.

James slowly got up and headed upstairs. He found himself standing in front of Harry's door. Lily saw him open the door and walk inside. She decided to give James a few minutes. She knew that James probably wanted to reassure himself that Harry was safe. Lily quietly went into her room, to patiently wait for James.

James saw that Harry was fast asleep. His feet lead him straight to him. He didn't want to wake him up but found that he couldn't walk away from his sleeping son. James saw the way Harry's breathing was calm and he seemed to be relaxed. James's mind was swimming with disturbing thoughts. The tomb, Voldemort's threat, the way Harry's name shone on that horrid headstone. James heard Voldemort's words ring in his ears again. 'I got to him once before. What's going to stop me this time?'

James finally broke down and silently collapsed on the ground, near Harry's bed. He wanted to get up and leave, he didn't want to wake Harry up. But his entire body seemed to become numb. He felt so defeated. He knew that Harry was wanted by Voldemort but seeing the black tomb made James realise exactly how much danger Harry was in. What could James do to make sure that Voldemort would stay away from Harry? How could he give Harry a normal life if he wasn't even allowed to leave his own home?

He was lost in his own tears and worries and didn't realise that his quiet sobs had woken Harry up. Harry stirred as he realised that someone was in his room. At first he thought it was Damien, just playing a trick on him. Then he realised that this person was crying. He could hear the ragged breathing and stifled sobs. At once Harry waved his hand, and the lights in his room flickered on. Harry was shocked beyond words to see his dad on the floor, head buried in his hands, shoulders shaking as sobs racked through him.

Harry climbed out of bed at once and was kneeling in front of his dad. Horrible thoughts flashed in his mind. Why was his dad crying? Did something happen to Sirius? Or Remus? Was there another attack?

"Dad! Dad, what's wrong? What happened?" Harry asked, with a racing heart.

James didn't answer right away. He looked up at his son's worried face. He had the strongest urge to embrace his son. To hold him close to his heart and never let him go, for fear of losing him. That was what had shattered James's self calm. That thought of losing Harry again. The thought that Harry would be taken away and would never come back. That tore him apart.

James managed to control his emotions as he looked at Harry's panicked expression.

"Nothing, nothing's wrong, Harry. Sorry...sorry to wake you" he managed to say even as tears continued to streak down his face.

Harry held onto his dad, trying desperately to figure out what was wrong. Why did his dad look so...broken?

"Dad, what happened? Is Sirius okay? Did something happen?" Harry asked again.

James shook his head in response, wishing that he hadn't come into Harry's room. He really didn't want Harry to know about that tomb. The image of the black marble tomb rose in James's mind again and at once, James seemed to dissolve again.

"Harry...Harry, please..." James managed to say before taking a deep breath to calm himself.

Harry was breaking into a cold sweat now. What the hell was going on?

"You...you have to promise me, please Harry, promise me that you won't leave the Manor by yourself." James said.

He knew that he wasn't making any sense. But at this point all James cared about was making Harry swear that he wouldn't leave the Potter Manor. Voldemort couldn't get to Harry inside the Manor. If Harry didn't take any more risks, he wouldn't fall into any traps laid by Voldemort.

Harry was stunned. He had woken up at three in the morning to find his father on the ground, sobbing like someone had died and all that he had to say was, 'don't leave the Manor'.

"Dad..." Harry started but couldn't complete his sentence as James grabbed onto Harry's hands and held them tightly in his own.

“Just promise me, swear that you won’t leave the Manor by yourself! I won’t ask you for anything ever again, Harry. Please, just do as I ask. Please!”

Harry could see the fear glistening in his father’s eyes. He could even feel the slight shaking of his hands as they gripped onto his own. He didn’t know what had happened but it had given James a fright for sure. Harry wanted to argue. He wanted to tell his dad that he could take care of himself and wouldn’t just hide away inside his home. But the way his father was looking at him. The way his gaze was almost begging him to agree, made Harry bite his tongue. He knew that he would have to agree, for now anyway. He couldn’t possibly turn his dad away when he looked so vulnerable.

“Okay, dad. I promise not to leave the Manor by myself. I swear, okay”

James relaxed at once. He sat still, trying to gather himself. His hands were still trapping Harry’s but James didn’t want to let go. Finally Harry managed to ease his hands out and helped James to stand.

“What happened?” Harry asked again but James only shook his head in response.

He wouldn’t be able to tell him anything. Above everything else, he knew how hurt Harry would be with Voldemort’s threat. Harry still cared for Voldemort, James knew that. With Harry’s refusal to hurt Voldemort, not to raise his wand at him, it was painstakingly obvious that a part of Harry still loved him. What would Harry go through, once he realised Voldemort’s plans to kill him, *to bury him alive*. James shuddered at the memory.

James apologised again for waking Harry up. He told Harry to go back to bed. Harry tried again to ask what had upset him, but James didn’t answer. He looked at Harry with such deep emotions that Harry felt a shiver run through him. Quietly, James left to go his own room. Harry returned to his bed but didn’t sleep. He kept on thinking about what could have happened that made James act like that.

xxx

The next day, James made sure that no Daily Prophet was left around for Harry to find, as it was full of images of the black tomb. The media had published reports on the latest attack by Voldemort and had a field day with the black tomb. Remus and Sirius came over very early in the morning and helped James and Lily calm down. Lily had not been able to tear her eyes away from the threat Voldemort had left. It was clear that the tomb had been attacked from all corners in an attempt to get rid of it but none to avail. It seemed the tomb was staying put.

Harry spent the rest of the day trying to figure out what had happened to make his dad freak out. But his many questions were cast aside and it led to a very frustrated Harry spending time training on his own. Damien had not been told about the tomb either. Both boys spent the next day or two coming up with their own ideas of what may have caused James's sudden over protectiveness. They didn't come any closer to the truth.

Both boys were hanging out in Harry's room, playing exploding snap, which Damien had forced Harry into playing, since they were so bored. Harry stopped playing as he heard whispering voices outside his room. Damien stopped playing as well and listened hard.

"...it just seems a tad silly now"

"No it doesn't. They were meant for him, he should have them!"

"Yeah, but, he can't really use any of them. He's grown out of them"

At this point Harry had flicked his door open and saw his mum and dad standing in front of his door, wearing very guilty expressions. Harry raised an eyebrow at them in question.

"Um, hi. We were just trying to sort something out" James said shooting Lily a last pleading look, which she promptly ignored.

"In front of my door?" Harry asked, with faked innocence.

Damien sniggered but no one noticed.

“We just wanted to give you something but we couldn’t figure out when would be the best time. So I guess since there is no time like the present...here you go” Lily said as she and James walked into Harry’s room. She held out a large box in front of her, which she had been hiding behind her back. James reluctantly held out two matching boxes.

Damien was instantly rushing towards the three cardboard boxes, asking what they were, but Harry stayed on the bed. He knew what was inside the three boxes as finding them had ultimately changed his life. He stood up slowly and walked over to his parents.

He knelt down and slowly prised open one of the boxes. Sure enough, they were filled with colourfully wrapped up presents. His mind was buzzing as he saw the presents again. He remembered the shock he had gone through when he first came across them. Damien was staring at the presents.

“What did you get him? Are all of those his? I want some!” he cried.

Lily shushed him with a stern stare but James just wrapped his arms around his youngest son, whispering in his ear that they were presents Harry had missed out. Damien instantly blushed at his childishness and kept quiet.

Harry pulled the presents out of the box but didn’t open any of them. James spoke up at once.

“We know that it’s really silly and you are too old to use most of these things, but your mother insisted on you having them. They were meant for you, even though we never thought we could actually get to give them to you.” James paused as he felt a little awkward at what he had just said.

When Harry didn’t look up or say anything, James took that as a sign that Harry surely did think that the presents were stupid. He quickly tried to make the awkward situation better.

“You can give them away if you don’t want them. We don’t mind! You won’t use any of them anyway, it was just a thought...” he trailed off as he saw Harry slowly look up at him.

It was just the look in his emerald green eyes that quietened James. They were filled with gratitude and love. James felt his heart beat painfully fast as Harry picked up one of the gifts and opened it with trembling hands. It was a Christmas gift when he was only four years old. A blue coloured toy hippogriff fell onto his lap. It sat up in Harry's lap and spread its wings out, ready to fly. It took off, flying at a ridiculously low height. Harry laughed as it flew around the room, and banged against James's knee.

James and Lily were relieved that Harry didn't think the idea of keeping presents for him was stupid. They realised that this was the first time he had ever received a gift meant for his birthday or Christmas. Voldemort had never celebrated Harry's birthday and any gifts he had ever received were weapons, meant to be used by him to finish off Voldemort's enemies.

Harry wanted to thank his parents, but he couldn't find the words. How was he supposed to say thank you for something that was so incredibly amazing. They had remembered him every Christmas and on his birthday. It took every ounce of self control that Harry possessed not to break down.

His parents didn't need Harry to say anything. The way his eyes lit up every time he opened a present and the innocent laugh that escaped him every time a particularly amusing gift was revealed was enough. They knew Harry was deeply touched by this.

Harry told Damien to help him open the gifts and the younger boy instantly sat on the floor and started ripping open the presents. James and Lily watched happily as their two sons acted like five year olds, opening presents and laughing at the childish gifts inside. It was a memory that James knew, Harry would always look back at with a smile.

xxx

As promised, Harry had not set one foot outside Potter Manor. He had spent many hours in his training ground with Damien, and was secretly very proud of his younger brother. Damien was a natural fighter, like Harry and had managed to grasp onto the basics fairly quickly.

James had devoted himself to finding and destroying Voldemort. It was just like the time Harry was a baby and the prophecy had come to light. James had been working hard then as well. He was seeing less and less of his family and had taken to locking himself in his office when he was home. He hated the distance this created from his family but James couldn't concentrate on anything other than Voldemort. Every time he closed his eyes he could see the horrid tomb looming before him and Voldemort's cold laughter ring in his ears. No one had been able to destroy the tomb yet.

Lily tried her best to talk to James and make him relax more but nothing she said would make him change his mind. Remus and Sirius helped the only way they could, by joining James in his quest to destroy Voldemort.

It was exactly six days until Harry's seventeenth birthday. It was a bright morning, with the wind clear and the sun shining strongly. Lily and Damien were outside doing some finishing touches on the front garden. Damien had tried to get James and Sirius to join them but they had refused as both men were busy trying to figure out how to get rid of the tomb. It was still causing much gossip in the media and the longer it was there, in Hogsmeade, the more fear it created or the wizarding world.

They had just finished going through one theory when the office door opened and Harry walked in. James had hardly had the chance to talk to Harry these days. He took a moment to survey his eldest son. Dressed in his jeans and pale blue t-shirt, he didn't look like someone who could duel and kill men three times his age. He didn't look like the assassin Voldemort had brought up. He looked like a normal teenage boy. Especially when he wore a smile on his face, like the one he had right now.

"Hey" he greeted as he came inside and closed the door softly behind him.

"Hey, what's wrong?" James asked as Harry never came to see him, especially in the office.

"Nothing. Just wondered what you were up to" Harry answered as he walked over to where James and Sirius were seated.

“Actually, I wanted to see what was so interesting that kept both of you up here while the rest of the world is enjoying the weather outside.” Harry corrected himself.

James looked at Harry as his dazzling green eyes shone in his direction and he was looking at him with a cheeky smile.

“Just Auror work” James replied.

“Auror work! You mean Aurors actually work. Could have fooled me” Harry joked as both James and Sirius threw him faked annoyed looks.

“You should be outside, enjoying the sun, not in here ridiculing us!” Sirius answered.

“So should you. Both of you should be outside, not stuck in here” Harry replied.

“Harry, please, we have a lot of work to get through. Once it’s done we’ll come out and join you” James told him in a tired voice. He had not been getting a lot of sleep lately.

Harry gave his dad a funny look.

“You won’t find out how to destroy it. If Voldemort has created it then it will stay there until he destroys it.” Harry told him.

James was confused as to what Harry was referring to.

“What?” he asked.

“The tomb. I assume that’s what you’re trying to figure out how to destroy.” Harry answered evenly.

James and Sirius were both staring at Harry in disbelief. Harry had found out about the tomb. But why wasn’t he upset or freaking out about it like he should be. Why was he standing there looking so calm?

“How...how did you find out about...about that?” James asked with forced calm.

Harry smiled again and pulled out a copy of the Daily Prophet. It was dated two days ago. The picture of the black tomb was taking up more or less the front page. James looked at it with a shudder.

"I found this yesterday" Harry answered.

"Okay, maybe that's the one we should have destroyed" Sirius said to James as he threw him an annoyed look. James had made sure all the copies of the Daily Prophet in the Potter Manor were destroyed. How this one copy managed to escape him was beyond him.

Harry didn't say anything more and just let the copy of the Daily Prophet drop onto the desk. James and Harry shared a long look. Neither spoke or made any move towards the paper.

"Um, I think I'll go and see what Damien is up to" Sirius said as he got up and quickly left the room. He knew that James and Harry were going to have a long talk.

After Sirius left, James took a deep breath.

"You are probably angry with me for keeping this from you, aren't you?" he asked.

Harry kept his eyes fixed on his dad before answering.

"I'm not mad at you" he said.

James felt a little relieved at that. He still didn't know how to talk to Harry about this. What was he supposed to say?

"This was why you made me promise to stay inside the Manor, wasn't it?" Harry asked quietly.

"Yes" James answered in a small voice.

Harry neared his dad's sitting form.

"You got so scared of this that you banned me from leaving the house? Isn't that a little extreme?" he asked in a casual tone.

James looked at Harry incredulously.

“Extreme? You think my reaction to this was extreme? Merlin, Harry! Can’t you see how much danger you’re in?” James couldn’t believe how calm Harry was about this.

Harry smiled at his dad’s reaction but this time his smile held a little sadness.

“When have I not been in danger? Apparently, Voldemort has wanted to kill me even before I was born. No one should be surprised by his actions. If anything, I’m thankful that he’s gone and done something like this. At least now he’s being truthful about his feelings towards me.”

Harry dropped his head as he finished. James felt his heart skip a beat as he detected the hurt in Harry’s voice. This must be so hard for him.

“Harry...” James started as he got up and started to walk over to him.

“It doesn’t change anything. Voldemort doing this, building this tomb, it doesn’t change anything. He was after me before this tomb was built, he’s going to be after me after this as well.” Harry interrupted as James stood before him.

“Does it change the way you used to think about him?” James asked. He had wondered about this. Would Harry be willing to hurt Voldemort after seeing the threat he had made against him.

Harry looked at James, eyes boring into each other.

“Like I said, it doesn’t change anything.” Harry said quietly.

“I can’t start wanting to hurt him just because he wants to hurt me. It doesn’t work that way. I know that if that time ever comes, when I have to face him...I won’t be able to...I can’t hurt him” Harry finished desperately wanting James to understand this.

James did understand to a degree. Voldemort had brought Harry up. He had made Harry believe that he loved him and cared for him. It was too much for Harry to disregard all of that as lies and for him to consider killing the man he had called ‘father’ for the last fifteen years.

James put a hand onto Harry's shoulder in a comforting manner. He squeezed it gently as he nodded his head to reassure Harry that he did in fact understand his feelings.

Harry looked at his dad with relief. He knew that his feelings for Voldemort were complicated and not everyone would understand why Harry couldn't kill him. Most would disregard any compassion that Voldemort had shown to Harry as lies and deceit, but Harry couldn't help feel the compassion he felt in return. That wasn't lies. Harry had truly loved Voldemort as his father. He only destroyed the Horcruxes to take revenge on him, not to destroy him.

Harry looked at the exhausted looking man before him. His eyes had dark circles under them and his skin was a bit pale. Harry realised that his dad had been worried sick with this black tomb. Harry felt immense love for his dad.

"Come on, dad. Stop trying to figure out the solution to this war. It's not your responsibility. Getting worried over Voldemort isn't going to do you any good. Come outside and enjoy the day with us." Harry said in his casual voice again.

"Harry, I can't. I really have loads to do" James said as he glanced at his desk, covered in littered parchment.

"If you come with me now, I'll promise to play Quidditch with you" Harry said, as Quidditch usually won over any argument with James.

James still looked unsure as he looked at his desk again.

"Come on, dad. I'll let you win this time" Harry said with a smirk.

James threw Harry an indignant look as he answered.

"Excuse me. I don't need you to *let me win*. I can win a game fair and square!" he said as he made his way towards the door.

"Sure, fair" Harry said as he made inverted commas with fingers for the word 'fair'.

Chapter Sixty Two

“Harry! Damien! Get inside now!” Lily yelled for the fourth time. When it came to Quidditch there was no way to drag the two boys from the pitch. Lily went back to setting out the table for lunch. At long last the two brothers came inside the kitchen, arguing loudly.

“Admit it, Damy. You lost!” Harry told him as he rested his Nimbus 3000 against the door.

“You didn’t count the last two goals I made! That’s cheating!” the younger boy argued back, face flushed red with annoyance.

Harry washed up and sat down at the table, his usual smirk playing across his face.

“You can’t possibly call those things goals. They were atrocious” he smirked back at him.

“Shut up, Harry!” Damien snapped back at him, thoroughly annoyed.

Lily spun around at once, a stern look on her face.

“Damien Jack Potter! I don’t want to hear that sort of language being used against your brother.” She reprimanded him.

Damien only scowled back at her and gave Harry a glare as he was clearly enjoying this.

“He can’t help it, mum. This is how spoiled brats react when they don’t get their way.” Harry replied grinning at Damien’s flushed face.

Damien kicked Harry under the table, hard, causing Harry to jump but he didn’t make any sound. He only smirked back at him.

“Careful, you’re training with me later.” Harry warned him.

Lily sat down at the table as well.

“See, this is why I don’t like Quidditch. It just makes everyone fight and compete all the time.” She said with a sigh.

Damien couldn't help but smile inwardly. He loved fighting with Harry. It felt...normal. At last they were able to behave like normal brothers. Being competitive and having small arguments over stupid things. He didn't have to worry and fret over Harry's safety and wellbeing now. He gave Harry a small grin as truce, and then began to shovel his food into his mouth as he was starved after playing for three hours.

James came into the kitchen to grab a bite to eat before disappearing into the office again. Harry watched him with a heavy heart. He had really tried to get his dad to relax but all his efforts were unsuccessful. His dad just couldn't stop fretting over Voldemort and that stupid tomb. Harry hoped he would give up soon. There really wasn't any way that tomb was going to get destroyed by anyone other than Voldemort. His magic was not something that could be so easily overpowered.

Later on, as Harry promised, the two boys were in the training grounds. Harry had started teaching Damien advanced street fighting. To give the thirteen year old credit, he was trying very hard to keep up.

"Come on, Damy! You're not even trying. If you kick someone like that you'll end up breaking your own foot! You've got the angle all wrong." Harry told him.

"I think I need a break!" Damien panted out and collapsed onto the ground.

"That's your problem. You need too many breaks. You have absolutely no stamina!" Harry reprimanded him.

Damien could only throw Harry a half heartened glare.

"Quit complaining and take a break as well." Damien said as he lay down on the ground and closed his eyes against the glaring sun.

He heard Harry sit down next to him. After a few silent moments, Damien sat back up.

"Can I ask you something?" he said in a small voice.

"You already did." Harry replied back.

Damien ignored Harry's answer and went ahead with his question.

"Do...would you ever be okay with...with You-Know-Who being destroyed?" Damien asked.

Harry's expressions darkened for a moment. He kept his eyes fixed on his younger brother before answering him.

"Why do you ask?"

Damien shifted uncomfortably and seemed to be choosing his words carefully.

"It's just...I was just thinking the other day that, everyone wants you to help destroy him. They all think that you destroyed his Horcruxes because you hate him, but you don't hate him, do you?"

Harry felt his entire body tense at the question. He wasn't sure what he felt for Voldemort anymore.

When Harry didn't answer, Damien continued.

"I remember how you were when...when Bellatrix got caught by the Ministry. You went to rescue her even though you could have been caught yourself. You told me once that you blamed her as well for betraying you just like Voldemort did. Yet, you went to save her in a heartbeat. I guess I'm just curious to know if you would do something similar if You-Know-Who ever got caught."

Harry understood why Damien was asking him such questions. He was afraid Harry would choose Voldemort over his own safety. His expression softened a little and Damien looked visibly relieved.

"It's different. Voldemort chose to hurt me. He was the one who made that decision. Bella...Bella was only following orders." Harry felt the familiar pain stab at his heart as he thought about Bella.

"She did a lot for me. I don't know if she really meant it, but all the memories I have of her are good ones." he added quietly.

"I don't know what I feel for Voldemort." Harry said honestly.

"I think a part of me really hates him but I still can't bear to think about him getting killed. I can't harm him, no matter how much I hate him. It's complicated" Harry finished awkwardly.

"Harry, you were ready to kill dad because you thought he had hurt you. But now you know that it wasn't dad and that it was Voldemort. Why do you feel differently about him?" Damien asked. This was the question that he had really wanted to ask.

Harry looked over at Damien and smiled sadly at him.

"I expected dad to love me, to care for me. I expected him to look after me. He was my father, it's his job to care for me. When I thought back to the abuse I suffered, I hated James Potter, because I couldn't understand why he hurt me. As a child I often wondered what I had done wrong and what I could do to make him love me. That's why I hated him so much, Dady, because I thought he hurt me when he should have loved me. He hurt me for no apparent reason. With Voldemort, the reason is crystal clear. He never loved me. I'm not his son, not his blood. Why should he love me? He did all those things to me to break me, so that he could make me stronger and serve him. He did it all for power. It's all he knows. Voldemort would do anything to gain power." Harry looked away from Damien as he struggled to say the last part.

"I didn't have any good memories of dad. All I remembered was his hatred. It was easier to hate him. But with Voldemort, I have all these memories of him being...being a father to me. I can't forget about all of that, even if I try. It makes hating him all that more difficult"

Damien felt awful for bringing up this topic. He had totally ruined Harry's good mood. He reached over to gently touch his shoulder, making Harry look up at him.

"I'm sorry for bringing all of this up. I was just curious"

Harry only gave a half heartened shrug in response.

"Come on, we better finish up" Damien said as he picked himself up from the ground. Harry stood up as well but didn't look like he was in any mood to finish training.

Before Damien could say anything he heard his name being called by someone. Harry spun around as well as his name was being yelled along with Damien's. The voice was definitely not their mothers. Harry knew instantly who it belonged to. Both brothers headed out of the training area and saw the owner of the voice, come running towards them.

Hermione was running at top speed, a look of glee on her face. Her bushy brown hair was flying behind her as she belted towards them. Harry could see Ron and Ginny walking calmly behind her, amused expressions on their faces.

"Harry! Damien! Have you heard? Oh, it's wonderful! Isn't it?" Hermione asked in a high pitched, loud voice as soon as she came near them. She threw her arms around Damien and hugged him tightly before turning on Harry. Both Harry and Damien were completely lost as to what Hermione was talking about.

Ron sniggered as he came to stand behind Hermione. Ginny also looked like she could hardly keep from laughing aloud.

"Mione, what are you all excited about? What happened?" Damien asked as Hermione was literally hopping on the spot with excitement.

"You haven't heard? How could you not have heard? Your mum must have been told before us. Oh, it doesn't matter" she said brushing away her own comment.

"It's the best news ever! Hogwarts is re-opening!" she exclaimed fervently.

Harry and Damien continued to stare at her.

"And, you're celebrating the fact that we have school and exams to go to? Wait a minute, what am I saying? Of course you are! You are Hermione Granger" Damien said, earning a smack on the arm from the bushy haired girl.

"You can say what you want, but I know you're just as excited as I am. I mean, it's Hogwarts!" she said enthusiastically.

Harry smiled at her excitement. He had no particular feelings for Hogwarts. He didn't really have a good time there. Being held there against his will and having Aurors watching you at all times, it wasn't much fun. But he was happy for the rest of them. Hermione in particular, since the girl seemed to live to do homework and study. He knew that Hermione was right. Even though they were acting like they didn't want to go to school, Damien, Ron and Ginny were all excited to go back to Hogwarts.

"We should be getting our letters soon. I can't wait to go back. Can you believe all the catching up we will have to do!" Hermione was saying as the group walked back inside the house. It was getting far too hot to stay outside.

"Wait, if you don't have the letters yet, how do you know about Hogwarts re-opening?" Harry asked as they all sat around the table with refreshing drinks.

"Professor McGonagall told me. She was at the Burrow this morning." She answered.

"Harry, will...will you be coming to Hogwarts?" Ron asked reluctantly.

Harry looked up from his drink.

"Somehow, I don't think I'll be on the student list." He answered.

He was sure that he wouldn't be asked to come back to Hogwarts. Whatever happened at his trial, most people were still wary of him and the Hogwarts Express incident would cause all sorts of conflict, regardless of the explanation given at the trial. Harry was certain that he would not see Hogwarts again.

xxx

It was only two days until Harry's birthday and even though the birthday party was supposed to be a surprise, Harry knew what they were up to. It wasn't really that hard to figure out as his parents, Sirius and Remus were forever whispering about it. Harry sometimes wondered if they thought he was deaf, since they would whisper about his surprise birthday plans while Harry was in the same room.

Granted Harry would always act like he was busy doing one thing or another, but he wasn't stupid not to realise they were making plans that involved the party to start as soon as the clock struck twelve midnight.

He didn't say anything about it though. He figured the adults should have their fun, planning the party. It was the only thing that made James come out from his office and look genuinely happy.

James and Lily were busy, whispering the final arrangements for Harry's seventeenth, while Harry and Damien sat playing wizard chess in the other corner of the room. Harry heard his mum disagreeing with his dad over something.

"No, no, no! That won't fit right with the theme! We have to sort something else out!" she whispered to him.

"Oh, come on, Lils! It would be perfect for him. Not everything has to be in with 'the theme'. Let me have this." James pleaded quietly.

Harry couldn't help the smirk that overtook him. His parents were arguing like children over who got to plan the party. Damien looked at his expression and raised an eyebrow in question. Harry shook his head and went back to the game.

Just as Harry was about to make a move, his hand shot to his scar and he had to clamp down on his tongue to keep from crying out. Damien looked at him in alarm and had already raised himself off the floor to get help when Harry shook his head at him. His scar was always playing up. He figured that Voldemort was not going to hold back any emotions for his sake now. He hadn't suffered anything worse than the day he came back from his trial. It was usually just a sharp stab of pain before eventually dulling down.

Harry hadn't said anything to his parents about this, as he knew they would get upset over Dumbledore's theory that the pain from his scar would continue to get worse and ultimately kill him. Harry had helped himself to his mum's lab and had made up a few batches of pain relief as it was the only thing that helped.

Harry had his back to his parents and slowly reached into his pocket to pull out a small vial of the potion. He was clenching his teeth hard to keep from making any noise. Damien gave Harry a hard look before glancing over at his parents. They were still busy whispering and hadn't noticed anything.

As quietly as he could, Harry uncorked the vial and gulped down the potion in one go. Instantly, the pain dulled down before dying away. Harry let out a quiet breath of relief. He gave Damien a small smirk to signal that he was okay. Damien crossed his arms over his chest and gave Harry a discontented look. He hated it when Harry suffered from these attacks and hated it even more when he refused to get help. Harry looked away from Damien, and continued playing chess. Damien gave up his glare and went back to playing as well.

After a few minutes, Lily got up from the table.

"Right, I'm going to start preparing lunch. I don't know where Padfoot and Moony are, but they're just going to have to eat their food cold. I'm not waiting any longer."

She was about to head into the kitchen when a loud popping sound stopped her in her tracks. Everyone in the room spun around in alarm to see what had happened. In the middle of the room a large ball of fire had appeared with a popping sound. The fire died away and a single feather fell to the floor. James rushed from the table and grabbed the feather before it fell to the ground. Harry saw that it was a phoenix feather.

James went pale as he read something imprinted on the feather. Lily was instantly by his side.

"Oh God!" she whispered as she took the feather from him.

At once both parents drew out their wands and headed for the fireplace. Harry and Damien shot to their feet at once and followed them.

"Harry, Damien. You both have to stay here!" Lily said in a worried voice.

“Mum, what happened? Where are you going?” Damien asked worried over how pale his parents were looking.

James and Lily didn't respond but instead took the pot of floo powder, getting ready to leave.

“Just stay inside!” James instructed them.

Before James could leave though, Harry reached out and gripped his hand, the hand holding the phoenix feather. Harry's green eyes widened with shock as he read the single word on the feather, **'Burrow'**.

Harry figured out that the feather was a warning sign from the Order. That meant that the Burrow had been attacked! Harry felt his stomach turn as he realised that the pain he had felt in his scar only a few moments ago, might be related to this attack. Harry let go of his dad and looked at him with determination.

“I'm coming with you” he stated simply.

“Harry...” James started to argue but was cut off as Harry took a handful of the floo powder and stepped towards the fireplace.

“I'm coming as well” he repeated as he stood, ready to leave.

“Me too” Damien added quickly, afraid he would be left behind. James and Lily didn't have the time to argue, so they let their two sons come with them.

James went first followed closely by Harry, Damien and Lily came last. As soon as Harry landed at the Burrow, he felt his stomach twist in knots. There was a crowd of defeated and injured looking people, huddled around the small table. He could hear someone crying and hushed voices, offering comforting words.

James and Lily rushed towards the table and Harry saw the familiar faces looking at them with sorrow. He saw that Remus and Sirius were standing with a bloodied Arthur Weasley. Both Remus and Sirius had blood streaked on their clothes as well. Molly Weasley was the one crying and had Tonks crouching before her, offering her a

glass of water. There was another red haired man with deep scars running over his face. He was trying to get Molly to stop crying as well. Harry figured he was Bill Weasley.

Harry felt Damien tug at his arm. Looking around he saw that Damien was pointing at Ron and Hermione, sitting on the ground, heads lowered and had silent tears running down their faces. A pretty, blonde haired girl was trying to get them to get up and sit in the chairs, but Ron and Hermione seemed not to hear her.

Harry saw Damien run over to them, trying to find out what had happened, but Harry already had a sickening feeling about what could have happened. His heart nearly ripped out of his chest as he realised that Ginny was missing. He looked around again, desperate to see the red haired girl but she was nowhere to be seen.

He looked at the table again and saw that Dumbledore was crouching beside two utterly defeated looking people. Frank and Alice were sitting motionless, tears streaked their faces as Dumbledore whispered words to them.

“What happened?” James asked as gently as he could.

Tonks looked up at him and stood up, still clutching the glass of water that Molly had not taken.

“We were attacked. I don’t know how, but somehow, the wards on the Burrow just collapsed! There were so many of them! I’ve never seen the Death Eaters attack like this. They were so prepared. They just came, and, the fight was over in a few minutes! We didn’t even get time to call for help.” Tonks finished sadly.

“What do you mean it was over in a few minutes?” Lily asked, fear evident in her voice.

Harry felt his heart beat more painfully. This was it. Tonks was going to tell them who had died. Tonks didn’t answer the question. She looked at Frank and Alice and broke down. Remus took over from her.

“The Death Eaters didn’t randomly attack the Burrow. The wards were brought down purposefully by them. They came for a particular

purpose.” Remus couldn’t finish either as he stopped to take a shaky breath.

“Moony?” James questioned, feeling fear grow within him.

Frank looked up at James with red rimmed eyes. He spoke in a broken, hollow voice.

“They took Nigel.”

Harry was still standing near the fireplace, but he heard the whispered words. He felt like the ground had been taken from under his feet. ‘Nigel, the Death Eaters had taken Nigel’.

“They came for him. I don’t know how they knew he was going to be here today, but somehow they knew. Nigel, Nigel was outside with Ginny and Hermione. We just saw the men apparating and we all ran outside to fight them. The Death Eaters kept us from reaching Nigel. They attacked us while four of them tried to take Nigel away.” Sirius was doing the explaining as the rest looked to ill to say anything.

“Ginny was the one who was holding him. She refused to let any of them near Nigel. She...she did everything she could, but the four Death Eaters just attacked her viciously” Sirius continued. Molly let out another sob, making Harry’s heart leap painfully at the thought of what happened to her.

“She, she wouldn’t let go of him. Her hands were bleeding because of the curses those bastards threw at her but she still wouldn’t let go! She brought up a shield to protect herself and Nigel when the Death Eaters tried to stun her and take him but the shield didn’t hold for very long. One of the men shouted that they were running out of time. The Death Eaters knew that help would arrive soon, so they...they took both of them. They got through her shield and just grabbed her and Nigel and portkeyed away” Sirius finished brokenly.

“Oh God” James ran a shaky hand through his hair as he tried to think of something comforting to say.

Molly and Arthur dissolved into tears again as did Frank and Alice. James and Lily looked as sick as the rest of them. No one could

understand what these parents were going through better than them. Lily hugged Alice and tried to comfort her. Damien was trying to get Ron and Hermione to stop crying as well. Harry stood in the midst of all this, feeling his own heart break. Nigel and Ginny. Both of them were at Voldemort's mercy now. He shuddered at the thought of what he could do to them. This was the reason Harry had not said anything to anyone about his feelings for Ginny. This was exactly why he had stayed away from her when he came back to his parents. He knew that she would be targeted because of him. It all seemed pointless now. She was taken by Voldemort, and Nigel, Merlin he was only a child, just two years old! Harry felt his legs tremble under him.

He moved away from the fireplace, just in time as it turned green and Fred and George tumbled out of the fireplace and hurriedly ran to their parents. They embraced them quickly before demanding to know what had happened. They were told by their brother Bill what had happened, only moments before Percy arrived by floo as well, looking very shaken. Harry moved to one corner of the room, wishing he could just disappear so that he could think about this.

Soon the Burrow was full of people as the rest of the Order arrived. The story of Ginny and Nigel was repeated again and again. Harry stayed in one corner of the room. He was vaguely aware of what was happening around him. His mind felt numb and every time he thought about Nigel, his heart twisted painfully. He didn't know what he would do if anything happened to him.

Green flames erupted again and Harry watched as Neville came hurriedly out of the fireplace. His eyes met Harry's for an instant before Neville looked away and spotted his parents. Alice stood up and embraced Neville tightly, all the while crying into his shoulder. Neville's face turned pale as he was told by his sobbing mother what had happened. Once Alice had finished she collapsed back onto the chair and let Frank wrap his arms around her.

Neville was beyond shocked. His little brother, his baby brother had been taken by the most evil wizard known. His eyes scanned the room, landing on Harry again. Neville's eyes narrowed at Harry but he quickly looked away. He approached Dumbledore and stood directly before him.

“What do we do now?” he asked in a strained voice. Harry could tell that Neville was trying very hard to control his emotions.

Dumbledore looked at him with his blue eyes, filled with sorrow.

“We will do everything in our power to get them back” Dumbledore answered solemnly.

“Get them back! How do you know that we will be able to get them back! How do you even know that they are still...?” Neville seemed to lose his nerve as he stopped and shook his head, trying to grip at his emotions.

“There isn’t much else we can do. We have to assume that Voldemort wanted Nigel alive. There must be a reason. Otherwise, the Death Eaters would have killed him right here.” Dumbledore explained.

Neville turned to his side and pointed directly at Harry.

“Ask him! He’ll know why that monster wanted Nigel! Go on, ask him!” Neville roared.

Harry didn’t even look at him. He couldn’t deal with Neville at a time like this. However, Damien had stood up from Ron’s side and took a threatening step near Neville.

“What the hell is that supposed to mean? Why are you blaming this on Harry? He’s not got anything to do with this!” Damien shouted at him.

“Of course he’s got something to do with this! Everything Voldemort does has something to do with him. He’s responsible for this! This has to do with him!” Neville shouted back at him.

“Neville!” Alice tried to get Neville to stop but he seemed to be too angry to hear anything his mother had to say.

“Ask him, Go on, Dumbledore. You have so much trust in him! Ask him to bring Nigel back. He’s the only one who knows where Voldemort is!” Neville continued.

At once, every eye was turned on Harry. James instantly went to his son's side, feeling the intense emotions hanging in the air.

"Neville, I know that you're upset. We all are. All of us will help to get Ginny and Nigel back. But you can't blame Harry for any of this. I'm sure Harry will help us in any way he can." At this he looked at Harry to make sure that Harry agreed.

Harry still didn't say anything. He moved an inch or two towards the rest. Dumbledore took this as a sign that he would help.

"Harry, I think I already know the answer to this, but for everyone's sake I will ask you, can you tell us where Voldemort is?" Dumbledore asked.

Harry looked at the room full of people, staring at him. He slowly shook his head.

"No, his home is placed under the Fidelus charm and Voldemort is the only secret keeper" he answered.

"So you can't tell us, but you can lead us to him!" Neville shouted again. This time Frank reached over and pulled at Neville's arm, forcing him to sit down.

Harry looked at Dumbledore, speaking only to him.

"You can't follow anyone to his home. There are many charms placed that will make you lose the way there if you're following someone. If you place a tracking device on someone, it will be detected since everyone has to go through two Death Eater checks, before the doors will open." Harry answered in an emotionless voice. It was the only way he could respond while everyone was watching him so closely.

No one spoke after Harry had finished. Any hope had been diminished as Harry told them how protected the place was. Neville lowered his head into his hands and broke down as he realised that there really wasn't anything he could do.

Dumbledore ordered the Aurors to go out and try and gather as much information as they could that could lead them to Ginny and Nigel.

Harry noticed that Snape had not come at the Order's warning. He was probably the only one who could tell them what state Ginny and Nigel were in.

The wards on the Burrow were still not responding to anyone. It would take a few hours to bring them back up. James offered his home to the Weasley family, telling them it would be much safer for them.

Soon the Weasley family, Potter family, Longbottom family, Sirius, Remus, Moody and Dumbledore left to go to Potter Manor. They had all settled into the living room as it was more spacious. Ron and Hermione had sat next to Harry and Damien, still not saying anything. The atmosphere was thick with worry and anxiety. Neville kept to himself and would take to pacing the floor every so often.

"I don't understand how the wards could have fallen. It just doesn't make sense. And how in Merlin's name, did they know that the Longbottom family were going to be here today" Moody asked the room at large.

No one spoke for a few minutes. Then there was a gasp heard. Harry looked at Percy as he sat there with his eyes large and a hand clasped over his mouth. He had gone even paler than before. He looked over at his parents with a shaky look.

"I...I think I know how-how they found out." he whispered.

All attention was focused on him.

"A f-fortnight ago, the M-minister asked me to, to, to give a detailed report on what p-protection spells are placed on my home. It was to be used as-as a new protocol to protect everyone's homes. I, I might have gave a few that were placed here. I thought he would be v-very impressed with all the spells we had in place. I didn't t-think that, that it would do any damage." Percy finished with a frightened look in his eyes.

"You told him about all the wards put in place? Percy, how could you?" Molly said in a furious voice.

"I didn't think anything of it. The Minister had come to me personally and asked me to do this report. What was I supposed to say? He's my boss and the Minister of Magic! I couldn't say no to him!" Percy tried to explain.

"You bloody idiot! How can you be so thick! Any idiot can disguise themselves as the Minister. Ever heard of Poly juice potion!" Fred erupted as George advanced on his brother, intending to knock some sense into him.

Bill grabbed a hold of George and made him sit back down while Moody stopped Fred from hurting Percy as well. Percy was sitting with his head hanging low. Harry felt rage build in him as well but refrained from saying anything. How can someone give up their protection spells to keep their boss happy? He decided to keep silent. There wasn't anything that could be done about Percy now.

"I think it's safe to assume that one of Voldemort's spies disguised themselves as Fudge so that they could fool you, Percy. Do not blame yourself. You were tricked. Something Voldemort does very easily." Dumbledore tried comforting him.

"They must have kept an eye on the Burrow to see when they would get the chance to get to Nigel" Moody offered as the mystery began to clear up. Everyone sat in silence after that, not really knowing what they should say.

Suddenly a strange sound was heard. Everyone looked at the window as it was heard coming from outside the house. James and Sirius already had their wands drawn and were ready to attack whatever came their way. They stopped as they saw the window open of its own accord and a large black bird swoop inside. As everyone watched the large bird flew straight to Harry. It landed on the table in front of him. Harry looked at the bird for a few moments. He was looking at it with no visible emotion. The rest were trying hard not to gasp at its appearance. It was ghastly looking. It was an eagle but its feathers were jet black. Its eyes were blood red and it was staring at Harry with an almost loathing look. Damien recoiled in his seat at the sight of it. There was no doubt in anyone's mind as to who

the eagle belonged to. Harry himself had seen it many times. It belonged to Voldemort.

Slowly, Harry reached towards it and took the black coloured envelope from its beak. The eagle took off instantly not waiting for anyone. Harry held the black envelope in his hands, staring at it. The silence in the room was deafening. Everyone held their breath as Harry turned the envelope over and tugged it open. At once the envelope soared out of his hands and rose in front of him, similar to what a howler does. It opened up and turned into a cloud of black, through which an eerie green skull appeared, a serpent protruding from its mouth. The Dark Mark!

A cold voice rang from the black cloud and filled the room.

"I can assume by now you have become aware of the current situation. I don't have to tell you what will happen to that brat and the blood traitor if you disobey me. You are more than aware of my ways. I have no interest in the two, even you know that. If you want them to live you will do as I say. Come back to me. If you don't come back by sunset today you will receive the mangled bodies of the girl and child by sunrise tomorrow. The choice is yours. Remember, by sunset today! You know how much I hate lateness."

The words echoed through the room and as soon as the last words were finished, the black cloud turned to a ball of fire before disappearing. Harry sat still as the words played back in his mind. No one knew what to say or do. So that was why Nigel was taken. Voldemort had taken Nigel as he knew that Harry would be forced to give himself up for the child's sake. Voldemort probably saw Nigel as the reason Harry turned against him in the first place. When Harry refused to kill Frank and Alice that was the first time Harry had gone against a direct order from him.

At last, Dumbledore spoke up.

"We know that both are alive. That is good news. We just have to come up with a way to rescue them from Voldemort." Harry looked up at the wizard before turning his emerald eyes to the window. There was three maybe four hours until sunset. What could they possibly do

in those few hours to save Ginny and Nigel? Apparently, Moody was thinking along the same lines.

“Dumbledore, I don’t think we have that much time. Voldemort has given us only until sunset today. We have to figure out a way that will allow us to follow Harry.” Moody said in an urgent voice.

At once James reared up his head and glared at Moody.

“What! What did you say? Follow Harry? No, Moody, I don’t think anyone will be following Harry anywhere because Harry’s not going anywhere!” James hissed at him.

Moody looked at James and turned to speak directly to him.

“There really isn’t any other way. We can’t figure out where Voldemort is and where he is keeping Ginny and Nigel. He wants Harry, we have to give in to that. It’s the only way” he explained.

“Whoa, whoa! Who gave you the right to decide that? Harry’s not going anywhere. We’re not going to give in to that monster!” Sirius said at once, standing up in anger.

Damien looked at Harry to see how everything was affecting him. Harry was still sitting down, hands clasped together, head bowed down. He seemed to be deep in thought, almost oblivious to the argument happening over him.

“Potter, Black, you’re not understanding me. I’m not suggesting that you give them Harry. All I’m saying is that we have to let Voldemort believe he’s got Harry. We have to let him think that if we want to save Ginny and Nigel” Moody tried to explain.

“You mean use Harry like bait? Forget it! We have to come up with a different plan.” James said at once.

“Potter, there are two children’s lives at stake here, we can’t let them die!” Moody barked out, losing his patience.

“I never said that!” James shouted back. He turned to Arthur and Frank, both were sitting silently. Neither had said a single word.

“Arthur, Frank. We will get Ginny and Nigel back! We will, I promise you that. But you can’t ask me to sacrifice my son like this. I can’t place Harry in danger. Voldemort will kill him the moment he sees him, and most likely he won’t spare Ginny and Nigel either. We have to come up with another plan. Please, don’t ask me to put Harry into danger.”

Arthur and Frank both looked at James and gave him a small nod.

“We would never ask you to endanger the life of your child just so that we could save our children’s lives” Arthur said in a hoarse voice.

Dumbledore began to form a meeting, coming up with different ideas. Harry stood up and slowly walked towards his room. He seemed to be in a trance. He had not uttered a single word since arriving at the Burrow. James caught Harry’s arm just before he left the room.

“Harry, I know that you’re probably feeling guilty, but don’t. This isn’t your fault. Just trust me, okay. Everything will be okay. We will bring Ginny and Nigel back. I promise.”

Harry looked at his dad as if seeing him for the first time. His eyes lingered on his dad’s face, as if he was taking in every detail carefully.

“Harry?” James said as the look in Harry’s eyes was staring to scare him.

Harry looked away before looking over at Molly and Alice, both who had tears streaming down their faces. He slowly looked at James again and gave him the smallest of nods.

“Just stay inside” James whispered as Harry headed towards his room. James gave Damien a nod to go after Harry and look after him. Damien got up and left quickly. Ron and Hermione got up and left with Damien, wanting to get away from all the crying.

Damien knocked once on Harry’s door before entering. He expected Harry to be sitting on his bed, or sitting at his desk with his head in his hands. He wasn’t expecting Harry to be pulling on his black cloak over his dark robes. Damien stood at the door as Harry finished doing up his cloak and turned to look at him.

Ron and Hermione came inside the room and closed the door sharply.

“What do you think you’re doing?” Hermione asked him in an angry tone.

Harry looked away from her and moved to take his wand. He wasn’t even looking at the three teens in his room.

“Harry, mate. You can’t be thinking about going there” Ron said in a small voice. His voice seemed to break as he said the last words.

Harry looked up at him, eyes softening as he took in Ron’s broken form.

“There isn’t any other way. No one can come with me. They can’t follow me and they can’t help me. I have to do this on my own.” he said quietly.

“We’re not going to let you do this, Harry. You can’t sacrifice yourself like this. There’s no guarantee that he’ll let Ginny and Nigel go after you’ve surrendered to him.” Hermione tried to explain.

Damien reached for the door. He wasn’t going to let Harry leave like this. He was going straight downstairs to tell his parents. Even if they had to lock Harry in a room to keep him safe, that he could deal with. Losing Harry wasn’t an option. He knew that if Harry left today, he would never come back. Voldemort would kill him. That much even Harry knew.

Before Damien could open the door, a loud click was heard as Harry wandlessly locked the door. Damien turned slowly to look at Harry. His emerald green eyes had regret already shining in them as he turned his wand at Ron.

“I’m sorry” he whispered as he shot out two Stupefy curses at Ron and Hermione, knocking them out. Both Ron and Hermione collapsed on the ground.

Harry turned his wand at Damien. As Damien watched Harry struggled to curse him. At last he lowered his wand.

"You can't curse me, Harry." Damien said as he took a step near him. He hoped that he could somehow talk Harry out of this.

"You can't take what Neville and Moody said seriously. They don't know what they're talking about. You have to let the Order take control of this. Please Harry, don't leave." Damien had slowly inched his way towards Harry so that he was standing directly before him.

"Harry, if you go back to him, he'll kill you. Please, Harry. Be reasonable." Damien pleaded as he inched nearer to him.

Harry looked at Damien and smiled at him.

"I know that. I know exactly what he'll do but I still can't stand back and let Nigel die. I can't sacrifice Ginny just to save myself. Voldemort won't stop here. If I don't go today, he will only bring more people into this. This has to finish today, one way or another."

Damien felt cold dread creep into him. He couldn't let Harry do this.

"You know that I'm not going to stand back and watch you walk to your death!" Damien said angrily to him.

"I know" Harry said again.

Without warning Harry lashed out and struck Damien in the face. Damien was knocked out instantly. Harry caught Damien before he hit the ground. He gently lowered him to the ground. Harry gently pushed back Damien's bangs so that he could look at his brother properly. He took in every detail he could about his brother's face.

"Sorry, Damy" he whispered before standing up.

He looked at his room for the last time before heading towards the open window. Without a backward glance, Harry left Potter Manor to go back to Riddle Manor.

xx

(You really think I'm that cruel to end it here! It is a rather nice cliffy. Hmm...nah! Read on!)

Harry felt his feet slam onto the hard ground as he apparated outside the Riddle Manor. Sunset was still half an hour away. Harry slowly began walking towards the place he had been brought up to consider as home. It was bizarre how much the place seemed to radiate fear. Harry had never noticed that before. He remembered the last time he had seen this place. It was the day he had learned the truth about his childhood.

As Harry neared the main doors he saw the Death Eaters positioned around the Manor look at him with glee. A few even sniggered as Harry walked over the threshold. Two masked Death Eaters were standing before him holding their wands before them. They didn't say anything until they completed their check. They took away Harry's wand, even though he knew they would do that. Once he was clear to go inside one of them whispered to him as he moved past them.

"Welcome home, prince"

Harry ignored him and walked as calmly as he could towards Voldemort's chamber. There were four Death Eaters walking alongside with him. They wouldn't dare touch Harry right now, but they were with him to make sure he didn't get away this time. As Harry neared the chamber his scar began to prickle and ache with pain. Harry had almost forgotten how much his scar hurt when near Voldemort. He clenched his teeth hard and tried to ignore the pain.

The doors to the main chamber opened as Harry approached them. Harry had only taken a few steps inside when he saw Voldemort standing next to his throne. He saw Ginny still cuddling Nigel close to her, huddled on the ground in the far corner. The chamber was filled with Death Eaters. But Harry couldn't look away from the red eyed wizard who he had grown up calling 'father'.

Harry walked steadily towards him, all the time feeling the pain in his scar worsen. He refused to look away though. Harry came to stand in the middle of the chamber. Voldemort looked at the boy standing before him. He turned his head to look out of the window. It was still a few minutes until sunset.

He walked over towards Harry, a smirk playing on his thin lips, red eyes glistening like rubies. He came to tower over Harry. The Death

Eaters watched eagerly to see the fall of the Dark Prince. To everyone's utter surprise, Voldemort opened his arms and enveloped Harry into a hug. Ginny let out a gasp as she saw the strange sight. She could see that Harry's arms were still by his side. He wasn't returning the hug.

Before anyone could wonder what was going on, they saw Voldemort's hand snake into Harry's hair. He suddenly pulled hard, snapping Harry's head back so that he was looking into Harry's face. Harry didn't let any sound escape him as his head was wrenched back painfully.

"I should slit your throat right now! But that would be too easy a death for you. Traitors should suffer before dying." Voldemort hissed at him. Harry looked deep into Voldemort's eyes. He didn't respond. He wanted to ask who the real traitor was, him or Voldemort.

Voldemort let go of Harry and took a few steps away.

"I always said that your unnecessary need to protect others would be your downfall. You should have listened to me." he gestured to one of the Death Eaters, who went over to Ginny and dragged her towards Voldemort.

Ginny let out a cry of pain as her arms were pulled hard to drag her. Nigel whimpered in her arms as he was jerked as well. Harry watched helplessly. If he wanted to save Ginny and Nigel he needed the right opportunity to make his move.

Ginny was dragged by Voldemort's feet and left there. She instantly tried to stand up but could only manage to sit up. Harry could see her blood streaked over her clothes. Her red hair was matted with blood and her hands, oh God, her hands were bloodied up so badly! She still gripped at Nigel's small form, refusing to let anyone take him away. Harry saw the small child cling to her as well. He seemed to be in a state of shock.

Harry turned his angry eyes towards Voldemort.

"You said you would let them go." He said in his most controlled voice.

Voldemort stilled for a moment. This was the first time he heard Harry's voice in six months. He felt the familiar calm overtake him as Harry spoke. His voice always used to clam him down. Voldemort shook these emotions away. This wasn't his Harry. He couldn't feel like this. Harry had to be punished.

"I will let them go, once my Death Eaters have had a little fun. You see, I had promised them their fun once you arrived. I figured you would like to watch what my Death Eaters get up to." Voldemort sat on his throne as he gestured to his Death Eaters.

At once, four Death Eaters headed towards Ginny. They tried to rip Nigel away from her. Ginny screamed as she kicked out and tried to bite the hands that were ripping Nigel away from her. She looked desperately at Harry, pleading silently to him to help her.

Three Death Eaters had their wands trained on Harry. If he moved at all they would curse him. Harry took his chance as one Death Eater moved closer to him. Harry lashed out and kicked him in the gut before grabbing his wand and pulling him up to use as a shield. The other Death Eaters couldn't react fast enough. Harry threw the killing curse at them before throwing the other Death Eater at the approaching masked men. Harry only had a few seconds before he would be hit with a curse. There were too many Death Eaters to fight alone. Voldemort watched all of this calmly from his throne. He knew that Harry had nowhere to go.

Harry hissed in parseltongue, opening a trap door that only Voldemort used. Voldemort sat up in his throne in shock. He didn't know Harry knew about that trap door. Harry rushed towards the opened door. His shield was absorbing the curses that were thrown his way. He grabbed Ginny as she freed herself and Nigel from the Death Eaters. All three rushed through the trap door, Harry threw a fire ball spell behind him, so that they other men couldn't follow him. Harry knew every single secret passageway in Riddle Manor. He picked Nigel up in his arms before grabbing a hold of Ginny's battered hand and running through the darkened passageway. He could hear the Death Eaters shouting out spells to put out the fire. His scar was exploding with pain, but Harry blindly made his way through the passageway.

At last they tumbled out into a dark corridor. Harry could hear the men running behind him. Voldemort must have put out the fire so that they could follow him. Harry closed the exit door, trapping the men inside the passageway. He ran along the dark corridor. Ginny had a moment to look behind her and saw to her horror that Harry had led her to what must be the prisoner cells. There were rows and rows of dark cells with chains hanging from the walls.

"Harry" she managed to choke out as she ran along with him.

"Trust me" Harry whispered back as he struggled to keep on running with his scar almost blinding him with pain.

They heard a thunderous noise which meant that the Death Eaters had blasted down the wall in an effort to get out. Harry turned a corner and banged open a small door. He ran inside and locked the door at once. Ginny could make out a small fireplace and lots of small furniture. She realised that it must be a place for house elves. She was dragged quickly over to a small fireplace.

"Get in!" Harry said to her.

Ginny quickly climbed into the fireplace. It was awfully small. She had to bend her knees and pull her elbows close to her body in order to fit in. She was going to have an awful bumpy ride. Harry handed her Nigel, who still seemed unable to do anything but whimper as Harry placed him into Ginny's arms.

Harry was about to open the jar of floo powder when Ginny realised something. The fireplace was small, very small. While Ginny was small and petite, she and Nigel would just manage to get through. But there was no way Harry would manage to get through.

"Harry, wait! How are you going to get out?" she asked fearfully.

Harry threw a handful of floo powder into the fireplace, making green flames erupt at once.

"Go to the Potter Manor. Everyone is there" Harry instructed her.

“Harry, no! I’m not leaving without you!” Ginny made to get out from the fireplace but Harry stopped her.

“Don’t be foolish! You have to leave now! Before they come. Please Ginny, go!” Harry pushed her back into the green flames but Ginny refused to leave without him.

“I’m not leaving you! We have to leave together” she stubbornly argued.

“Ginny, think about Nigel. You can’t gamble with his life. Please go, now!” Harry pleaded with her. He could hear the footsteps getting nearer to the door. Soon the Death Eaters would come bursting in.

Ginny looked at the small child in her arms. Nigel was crying and whimpering in her arms. She looked desperately back at Harry.

“Please, Harry, don’t make me do this! Please. I can’t leave you! There has got to be another way. I can’t do this! I can’t.” she said with tears running down her face.

Harry reached over to her and gently held her face in his hands.

“You can, Ginny. Do this for me! I’ve never asked you for anything. Please, do this for me” with that said Harry leaned over and captured Ginny’s lips in a kiss.

Ginny could feel nothing but Harry’s lips brushing against her own. Harry pulled away and looked at her with so much love it made Ginny’s heart break.

“Go” he urged her.

There was a sudden bang and the door to this small room shuddered as the Death Eaters tried to smash it open.

Harry stood away from her. Ginny looked down at Nigel again before raising her brown eyes to look at Harry. Quietly she whispered ‘Potter Manor’.

The green flames swirled around her and Nigel. Ginny kept her eyes fixed on Harry as the green flames engulfed her, pulling her away from this place. The last thing she saw was the door being blown apart and a stream of curses flying directly at Harry.

Ginny fell out of the fireplace and landed on a soft rug. She was shaking horribly. At once she felt a pair of hands lifting her and her mum's face swam into view. Ginny was still hugging Nigel and with one hand she threw herself at her mum, crying the entire time.

Molly cried and kissed her only daughter again and again. Ginny felt someone trying to pull Nigel away from her. She instinctively gripped onto him, refusing to let go.

"Ginny, honey. You can let go now" she heard her dad's voice and she let go of the small boy.

She saw Frank and Alice embrace their child, crying with relief. Nigel seemed to come out of his shock and started to cry as he threw his small arms around his mum.

She was being pulled and hugged and kissed by everyone. She wanted to pull away from them all and tell them to help Harry. She wanted to tell them that it was Harry who had saved her and that he needed help now.

She caught sight of James and Lily standing in one corner of the room. They were staring at her in a way that made Ginny cry harder.

James and Lily had realised that Harry was missing over an hour ago. James had gone to check on Harry and the others and had come across the three unconscious teens. After reviving them, the three told everyone that Harry had left to save Ginny and Nigel.

They had hoped and prayed that Harry would return back with Ginny and Nigel. James looked at Ginny as she looked directly at him. She slowly shook her head and dissolved into more tears. He felt like someone had pierced his heart. He understood the look Ginny had given him. He could read the grief clearly in her eyes. Harry wasn't coming home.

[illegible]

Chapter Sixty Three

The air in Potter Manor was thick with worry and a terrible sense of loss. No one had anything comforting to say. Everyone listened intently, growing more and more fretful as Ginny went through the events that took place in Riddle Manor. Nigel was still curled up in his mothers lap and refused to leave. He hadn't said a single word since coming back. The small boy had been engulfed into a hug by Alice as soon as Ginny had let go of him.

Poppy had been called so that she could attend to Ginny and Nigel. She said that the small child was in shock because of the trauma he had gone through, but he would be fine. He would go back to being normal once he realised that he was safe and wouldn't be in any kind of danger. He was too young to understand what had happened to him. All he knew was that he had been taken away from his parents. All the screaming and crying around him had distressed him.

At the moment, Poppy was busy trying to heal Ginny's hands. She could hardly concentrate. Her mind kept wondering back to what Harry would be going through. Ginny had fallen quiet after telling everyone how Harry had forced her to escape. She sat still, eyes full with tears, as Poppy wrapped bandages over Ginny's hands. They were badly damaged and would take a few days to recover.

Across from her sat the silent form of Damien. His face was still sore from the attack by Harry. His hazel eyes were fixed at the fireplace as if silently willing Harry to come tumbling out, as Ginny had only a half an hour ago. He still couldn't believe Harry had left. He felt a hand gently squeeze his shoulder. He tore his gaze away from the fireplace and looked up to see Hermione's tear streaked face come into focus. Hermione knelt next to Damien and wordlessly comforted him. She didn't know what to say to him that could possibly make him feel better.

At long last Dumbledore raised his head and addressed the room at large.

"We have to wait for Severus. He's the only one who can help us get to Harry. Do not lose hope. Harry will get through this." His last

sentence was directed towards the two broken parents sitting in the midst of the others.

Neither James nor Lily acknowledged what Dumbledore had said. Sirius took a frustrated sigh as he looked over at Dumbledore. 'If Snape is our best chance at getting to Harry, then all hope is lost' he thought miserably.

xxx

Harry was thrown roughly onto the stone floor. His head smashed onto the ground causing a small gasp to escape him. Harry lay panting for air as the sound of footsteps surrounded him. The pain in his scar was making him feel sick. Harry had been knocked to the ground by the stream of curses coming from the Death Eaters, as soon as Ginny and Nigel had safely flooed back to Potter Manor. They had then bound his hands behind his back and dragged him back to throw before their Master.

Harry felt two pair of hands grabbing him from his upper arms and pulling him to his knees. Harry's vision swam as both his head throbbed with pain and his scar flared up more fiercely. He felt, more than saw, Voldemort's glare fall on him. His vision cleared to show Voldemort standing before him, anger lurking in his red orbs.

Harry stayed on his knees. He knew it was futile to get to his feet as he would be forced to bow before Voldemort again. Harry kept his eyes fixed on his former parent, silently challenging him to stay true to his word and take revenge.

Voldemort tightened his grip on his wand and calmly walked down to stand directly before Harry.

"I was right about you. You couldn't be more of a foolish Gryffindor if you tried!" he hissed angrily to him.

Harry let a smile spread over his face as the familiarity of the insult washed over him.

"It is in my blood after all." he stated back evenly.

Harry tried not to hiss at the pain that exploded in his scar. Voldemort looked away from Harry and motioned to the Death Eaters holding him. At once Harry was hoisted to his feet. Harry was now looking at Voldemort at eye level. Voldemort leaned in so that his face was inches away.

“Don’t think I won’t drain you of the last drop of Gryffindor blood you possess!” he hissed again, eyes glowing red as the frustration and anger deepened within him.

Harry didn’t respond. He wanted to but all he could do was clench his teeth together in a bid to relieve the pain he was in. His scar throbbed and stung and the pain intensified with every passing moment.

Voldemort suddenly walked away from Harry to stand facing his Death Eaters.

“None of you are to leave! No one will turn away or leave this chamber until I give permission!”

The Death Eaters all responded as one, agreeing to their Masters command.

Voldemort stood motionless for a moment. It seemed he was trying to decide what to do next. He looked over at Harry and anger sparked through him again. He motioned to the Death Eaters holding Harry.

Harry felt himself being dragged towards the centre of the chamber. He could have put up a fight but Harry had already resigned himself to his fate. He had decided to give in and let Voldemort take his revenge the moment he had decided to leave Potter Manor. He had been a fool to think he would get away with not facing Voldemort. Harry knew he had nothing but a horrible death waiting for him as he had left his home and made his way back to Riddle Manor. All Harry had wanted was Ginny and Nigel to escape unharmed. That he had accomplished. The rest didn’t matter to him. He knew the Voldemort would drag out his death. It was the only thing Voldemort knew; how to cause pain.

Harry saw two poles being conjured in the middle of the chamber. Harry was dragged over to them and his bound hands were untied

before his arms were strapped tightly to each of the poles. Harry felt the bonds pulling at his arms, until his muscles were screaming in protest. He didn't let any sound escape him though.

The Death Eaters had gathered to stand around Harry in a circle. Most had clear anticipation shining in their eyes. They wanted to see what would happen to the legendary Dark Prince. However there were two Death Eaters that were trying to mask their terror at seeing Harry like this. Snape was using every ounce of Occlumency he possessed to mask his dismay. True, he never cared for the boy. But he didn't want to lose the prophesied one either. He was the only one who could free Snape from his double life. With Harry gone, who knew how much longer Snape would have to lead this dangerous life as spy.

The other Death Eater however did care for Harry. He had cared for him as much as he cared for his own son. He had brought the child up, taught him many skills and had watched the scared child grow to become a feared warrior. Lucius Malfoy shut his grey eyes and tried to breathe as he saw Harry being tied to the poles. His mind was screaming at him to help Harry, to save him but he knew that there was no way he, or anyone, could help Harry now. He closed his eyes, hoping to block out whatever punishment was coming Harry's way. Fate, however, was not with Malfoy today.

"Remove your masks" Voldemort's cold voice commanded them.

Malfoy snapped open his eyes and removed his mask, as did the rest of the Death Eaters.

Harry clenched his jaw tightly as anger swept through him. Voldemort wanted Harry to see who was watching him while he was tortured. He was going to make his torture as public as possible. The Death Eaters looked hungrily at Harry, waiting impatiently to hear him scream, and hopefully, if they were lucky, they might be the ones Voldemort commanded to make him scream.

Voldemort went to stand in front of Harry. He leaned in close so that Harry had could only look at him and no one else.

"I want you to know that you are responsible for what is about to happen and what will happen for the rest of your very short life! You brought this on yourself. I had such plans for you but you went and threw it all away! I had success and contentment planned for you but you're the one who decided to fill your last days with nothing but pain and torture."

Harry finally unclenched his teeth as the rage within him boiled over.

"You have given me nothing but pain all my life. Why end things differently?" Harry said bitterly.

Voldemort was taken aback by what Harry said. He backed away and stared hard at him.

"I gave you everything a wizard could dream of! I gave you power! I gave you skill! I even gave you the status of heir to Salazar Slytherin! I made you powerful! And what did you do in return? You used that same power and skill to destroy me!"

Harry had to bite his tongue to keep from screaming out in pain. His scar was surely going to burst open again. Through clenched teeth Harry hissed at Voldemort.

"You made me what I am, a killer!" Harry wanted to say so much more to him but the pain in his scar stopped him from pouring out all his bitter feelings.

Voldemort moved closer to Harry's bound form, gently tracing the aching scar on Harry's forehead making Harry groan in pain.

"You betrayed me, Harry. You turned against me after everything I did for you. You will have to pay for your crimes" Voldemort told him in a quiet, almost gentle voice.

He abruptly moved away from Harry. He turned to his Death Eaters, taking in everyone's expressions. He called forward one of his Death Eaters.

"Macnair!"

The Death Eater came forward at once and kneeled in front of Voldemort, awaiting instructions. Voldemort seemed to hesitate for a moment before pointing his wand at the ground before Macnair. Malfoy felt his breath hitch in his throat as he saw what Voldemort had conjured. A whip lay at Voldemort's feet.

"Pick it up" he ordered Macnair who quickly obeyed.

Voldemort turned around to face Harry. He raised his wand once more and pointed at the bound figure. Harry had to suppress a gasp as his robes disappeared leaving him standing before all of them in just his black pants. He tried not to shudder as the cool air whipped at his naked chest.

Harry had no visible trace of fear on his face but Voldemort knew how terrified he was on the inside. When Harry was growing up he had woken up numerous times in the night, crying, shaking and even being sick as the nightmares of 'James' whipping him had resurfaced. It was one of the memories that caused Harry the most pain.

"Thirty lashes! No more, no less. When you're done, leave him here and leave. All of you!" with that said, Voldemort turned around and left the chamber without looking back.

The door to the chamber clicked loudly when closed. The surrounding Death Eaters moved in closer to see the torture session start. Harry was doing his best not to look at any of them. He kept his gaze fixed firmly away from Lucius.

Macnair smirked at Harry as he moved to stand in front of him. He unfurled the whip and let it dangle in front of Harry so that he could see it. Harry kept his gaze fixed at a spot above everyone's heads. He wasn't going to look at their sneering faces as he was beaten to a bloody pulp. Macnair moved to stand behind Harry. He smacked the whip across Harry's back. The Death Eaters cheered and shouted out 'one!' as the sound of the whip hitting Harry's flesh rang through the chamber. Harry flinched hard as the whip tore into him but otherwise kept silent.

Lucius tried hard to tune out the sound of the whip tearing into Harry's back. No matter how hard he tried, he found he couldn't look away

from the teen. Harry would flinch every time the whip made contact but not a single whimper left him. After only ten lashes, Harry's back was bleeding profusely. Blood was running down his back and was making small puddles on the stone floor. Harry had still not uttered a single word. The Death Eaters were joyfully counting the lashes as both Snape and Lucius tried to hide their disgust. Lucius saw the muscles tense in Harry's neck as he prepared himself for the strikes. His bound hands were curled into fists and even though he hadn't made any sound during the punishment, his breathing was becoming laboured.

At the eighteenth strike, Harry let out a small whimper of pain as the whip had cut across another welt. The Death Eaters cheered louder than ever and urged Macnair to make Harry scream. Malfoy felt his heart rip to pieces as he heard another cry leave the boy. His back was covered in bleeding welts. Unless Macnair started whipping Harry's torso, the strikes were going to cut across the previous welts. Malfoy looked helplessly at the boy, who was panting heavily and was finding it difficult to stay on his feet. He swayed a little as the pain was overwhelming his senses.

Malfoy felt his heart twist painfully again as he looked at the boy he had fondly named 'Dark Prince'. His hair was soaked with sweat and was clinging to his head which was now dropping down due to exhaustion. His eyes were shut tight and his breathing was laboured.

Macnair moved from behind Harry and came to stand in front of him. With another sadistic smile, he aimed the whip at Harry's chest and shoulders. Harry's emerald eyes flung open and he hissed at the pain that erupted in his chest. His pain filled eyes met Lucius' and Lucius felt his knees weaken. He wanted to help Harry, but he couldn't. It would do no one any good if Malfoy went against Voldemort at this point.

Wearily and choking back his emotions, Malfoy watched the last ten lashes falling on the boy's torso. He tried desperately to ignore the stifled cries that left Harry as his torso was ripped open by the whip. Macnair kept away from Harry's lower abdomen. He didn't want to kill the boy as Voldemort had clearly wanted Harry to be kept alive for now. He kept the strikes aimed at Harry's shoulders and upper chest.

He caught the side of Harry's neck making him cry out in agony. The Death Eaters roared with laughter and joy at hearing Harry scream. They were cheering Macnair and shouting out obscenities at Harry. With Voldemort not present, the Death Eaters were not afraid to say what they really felt towards the Dark Prince.

At long last the thirty lashes were over. Macnair flung the whip away from himself, which was now covered in Harry's blood. Harry was barely able to stand. He hung from the poles, breathing heavily and trying not to groan at the burning pain in his back and torso and his aching scar.

The Death Eaters wanted to keep on hurting Harry but their fear of hurting him without Voldemort's permission made them reluctantly leave. Malfoy was the first one to leave. He couldn't bear to look at Harry any longer. Snape was last to leave. He had hoped the Voldemort stretched out Harry's death so that the Order would have a chance to rescue him. Snape moved towards the door to leave. At this rate Harry was not going to survive very long.

xxx

Most of the Order had left. They had been instructed to find out as much information as they could. In truth nobody knew what they could do to find Harry. They had spent decades looking for Voldemort, how were they going to find him in a few days? The other fact that nobody dared mention was that Harry wasn't going to last a few days. He was probably already dead.

The Weasley family was staying with the Potters. The Longbottom family, Remus, Sirius and Dumbledore were still with them. Nigel had fallen asleep and was currently tucked up in one of the guest beds. Ginny, Hermione, Ron and Damien were sitting with the rest of them. All of them were busy coming up with ways to rescue Harry. Unfortunately, all of their plans had great shortfalls. Riddle Manor was too well protected; they didn't have time to bring down any of the wards, even if they knew what all of them were.

James felt like his head was going to explode. He kept on trying to grasp onto any small hope that there was a way to get to Harry. But as all of their plans were shot down one by one, James started to

realise that he may in fact never see his son again. The four teens were doing their best to help, but they couldn't think of any way to help. It was better for them to be a part of the discussion though. It felt like they were actively trying to do something to help Harry rather than just sitting and crying over him.

There was a muffled sound near the door and the inhabitants of the living room looked up to see an uncomfortable looking Neville standing in the doorway.

James looked away again. He knew it was futile to place blame but he knew that Neville's harsh words had contributed towards Harry taking such a suicidal step.

"Neville?" Frank asked.

Neville shifted his weight uncomfortably before taking a small step inside the room.

"Is Nigel awake?" Alice asked as Neville had been watching over his baby brother.

"No, he's still fast asleep" Neville answered quietly.

Neville walked over to the group, nervously looking away from the Potters.

"I...I wanted to, um...I wanted to ...to help" Neville stuttered and finished lamely.

"Help?" Damien had been the one to ask the question.

Neville lifted his gaze and looked at his former friend.

"I don't know what I can do to help, but I want to be a part of this. I want...I want Harry to come back" he said quietly.

"So you can torture him some more by your words!" Damien snapped at him.

“Damy” Lily wearily tried to stop Damien but the upset teen wasn’t listening to her.

“I know that what happened today, it was my fault. I don’t know why I said all those things to him. I was just in shock about Nigel and everything. I really didn’t mean for Harry to go to Voldemort. I didn’t think Harry would actually take me seriously. I was just upset.” Neville explained.

Damien continued to glare at him but didn’t say anything more. Neville sat down at the table and looked directly at James.

“I’ll do anything I can to help find him and bring him back. I owe him.” he said the last part quietly but James heard him all the same. He looked over at the miserable looking boy and gave him a small nod.

A few moments later the fireplace turned green and a figure stepped out of it. Everyone in the room rose to their feet instantly, James and Dumbledore at the forefront. Snape shook his robes to clear the soot, as was his normal behaviour. He looked up at the room full of people staring at him. He walked into the middle of the room and looked directly at James’ pale face. They had never quite forgiven each other for their Hogwarts antics but over time they had agreed to suffer each others presence. Today, Snape saw the desperation on James’ face and almost felt compassion for his old school rival.

“Severus” Dumbledore broke Snape’s gaze away from James and he looked at the old wizard.

Snape took a deep breath before looking at the room at large.

“He’s still alive” he simply stated.

Relief flooded into everyone at hearing those simple words.

“But for how much longer, I can’t say” Snape continued.

“If you want him, you better get him out quick because I don’t think he will be able to take much more of Voldemort’s punishments” Snape finished.

Snape ran through a quick account of what happened to Harry once he arrived at Riddle Manor. He didn't go into much detail about Harry's punishment. Truthfully he didn't think he could handle everyone's reaction. And others like Sirius would blame him for not helping Harry, even though it was obvious he couldn't.

"Severus, is there any way we can get Harry out" Lily asked in a tight voice.

Snape shook his head.

"No, he's in Voldemort's chambers and will stay there. He's going to be constantly under Voldemort's watch. It will impossible to get to him."

"Is there no way to get to him? No way at all?" Damien asked in a small voice.

"I guess you could ask the Dark Lord very nicely. He might let him go." Snape answered back with a sneer.

"Use your head, boy! If there was a way we would be half way there by now!" Snape snapped at him.

James would have told Snape off for yelling at his son but he didn't feel like he could muster up any energy right now. His head was spinning and every time he closed his eyes, he could see the black marble tomb, looming through the darkness at him.

"Well, we can't just sit here! What's the point of you being a spy if you can't help Harry escape?" Damien yelled back, rising out of his chair.

"My purpose of being a spy is beyond your comprehension. So just sit down and keep your mouth shut!" Snape snapped back at him.

"No! I won't! You can't just come here and tell us that Voldemort is torturing Harry but there isn't anything we can do to help him! That's not helping, that's just making things worse for us! You're supposed to be on our side but it seems like you don't want to help us at all!" Damien was yelling all of this at his former Defence against the Dark Arts teacher, the same teacher he was always intimidated by, but he

wasn't scared of him today. All Damien could feel was white hot anger at hearing what Harry was going through as the rest of them sat down comfortably, listing all the things they couldn't do to rescue him.

Snape reached over to grab the insolent boy. He wasn't going to hurt him; he just wanted to scare the little brat into shutting up so that he could talk. Before Snape could wrap his fingers around Damien's collar, a force knocked into Snape and threw him across the room.

Snape hit the wall and collapsed on the ground. He sat up, seething with anger at whoever had attacked him. He was surprised to see everyone looking shocked at him and Damien. Nobody had intervened. Even Damien hadn't uttered a single curse to protect himself.

Snape stood up, wincing as his back disagreed with his actions. Suddenly, understanding dawned on Damien's face and he reached into his robes and pulled out a silver pendant. Snape saw the black stone gleaming in the light. He moved towards Damien, slowly this time, and studied the strange stone.

"Is this...?" he started as Dumbledore finished his words for him.

"Yes, Severus. It is a Layhoo Jisteen."

Snape continued to stare at the stone. It really was breath taking. He pulled away from the stone and looked at Damien's tear stained face. The fire that had erupted in him moments before had left him.

"I assume that this was given to you by Harry?" Snape asked.

Damien nodded his head.

"He gave it to me to protect me. It doesn't let anyone hurt me" Damien told him in a small voice.

"Especially anyone bearing the dark mark" Dumbledore added.

Snape understood why he was thrown away from the boy. He was bearing the dark mark. He wouldn't be allowed to touch him, even if he meant no harm at all.

Damien stood miserably as Snape studied the stone. He knew that no Death Eater, even a spy one, could hurt him. Actually, no one wanting to cause him harm could get near him. He assumed that since Harry was the one who had cast all these powerful charms on the stone, he was the only one who could override them. That was why he had managed to knock him out earlier that evening. Damien's heart twisted painfully again as he remembered the last time he had seen Harry.

Snape looked thoughtfully at the stone before looking squarely up at Damien, a smirk spread over his face. He was ignoring everyone else around him

"Well, Mr Potter. It seems we may have a way to get to Harry after all."

xxx

Voldemort sat deep in thought. This wasn't how he had imagined things would go at all. He knew that seeing Harry again after so long would bring back emotions he would rather not have, but the immense anger he had felt when Harry was thrown before him, bound and hurt, he had to take very controlled actions not to hurt his death Eaters, who were only following his orders.

Harry, why did he have to betray him like that? Why couldn't he go back to being the good, obedient son he used to be?

The thing bothering Voldemort the most was the influx of emotions he had involuntarily sensed from Harry. He always found that he could sense Harry's mood or what he felt. He had sensed the anger and pain that Harry felt at returning back to Riddle manor. He could also trace some fear. Harry knew he was not leaving the Riddle Manor alive. But the thing that threw the Dark Lord was that he had detected loyalty towards himself. That didn't make any sense. Harry wasn't loyal to Voldemort. He had gone against him, declared war against

him when he set out to destroy his Horcruxes. How could Harry feel that he was still loyal to Voldemort?

He had sensed the deep seated hurt and the feelings of being betrayed. It was so similar to the pain Voldemort felt when he thought about losing Harry. Harry blamed Voldemort for betraying him, lying to him for years while Voldemort accused Harry of those very things as well.

The Dark Lord shook his head in annoyance and tried to get his headache to go away. He had not been able to sit in peace since leaving Harry in the hands of Macnair. He knew that if he had stayed to watch, he would have killed Macnair even before the first strike hit Harry. He couldn't stop the protectiveness he felt for Harry overpowering him.

He had not intended to let Harry suffer like that, but Harry wasn't making things any easier for himself. Voldemort had to punish him. It was the only thing he could do to show his Death Eaters what would happen if they betrayed him. He hoped the Death Eaters realised that if Voldemort could torture and mercilessly kill the Dark Prince for betraying him, then just what could he do to them if they ever thought about leaving him.

xxx

Harry groaned as the sharp light hit his eyes. He strained his head to look at the source but his eyesight was too blurred to make anything out. His back and chest was on fire. If he moved at all, even slightly to shift his weight from one foot to the other, his back would sting like crazy, forcing him to stop mid way.

Harry had been left tied to the poles in the middle of the chamber. He had hoped he would fall unconscious, even just to have a small break from the constant pain that he was in, but his mind wasn't letting him drift off.

The light neared him and Harry realised that it was a lit wand. Harry tried to move out of the way as the light burned into his closed eyelids, but he couldn't move much at all.

“Having fun?” a voice came from behind the light.

Harry opened his mouth to hurl abuse but only managed a dry cough. His throat was dry and parched.

“We’re only getting started, Prince!” another voice added.

The chamber lit up and Harry stifled a groan as he saw two Death Eaters, looming before him.

“Come on, you’ve got a lot of people waiting for you” one of them said as he waved his wand to release Harry from his bonds.

Harry was trying to get his feet to support his weight but he couldn’t manage in time. The Death Eaters cast an immobility spell on him before releasing his bonds. Harry fell hard to the ground as the bonds holding his arms were lifted. The Death Eaters laughed at Harry’s injured form before kicking him.

Harry was dragged out of the room by the two men as Voldemort stood in the private doorway, watching with a heavy heart. He had ordered the Death Eaters to do what they normally did with prisoners. He warned them not to kill him though. He moved to close the door to block out any sounds. He didn’t trust himself to stay calm if he heard Harry scream.

xxx

“Wait, I don’t get it. How is this going to help us get Harry?” Sirius asked annoyed at Snape.

“Like I said...” Snape started again, glaring at the dark haired man.

“...we take the Layhoo Jisteen back to Voldemort. He has been looking for it ever since it went missing. It is a priceless artefact and something Voldemort has been planning on using”

“But, that doesn’t give us Harry back! Voldemort is not going to trade Harry for the Layhoo Jisteen! He won’t let Harry go for anything” Damien interrupted.

Snape took a deep breath in an effort to control his anger.

"I wonder if your brain is actually capable of thinking anything other than complete rubbish!" he scolded.

"Hey!" Sirius jumped to Damien's defence.

"Of course, Voldemort is not going to trade! We're not going to even try and exchange the stone for Harry. That's just asking to be killed on the spot." Snape told them in an exasperated voice.

"Then what are you trying to suggest" James asked. He had spoken for the first time since Snape arrived. Snape turned his dark eyes on James.

"The stone is the key to get to Riddle Manor. As you all know it is a powerful stone. It has the capability to store and control vast amounts of magic. A stone as powerful as this would easily be able to work in our favour" Snape finished with a smirk on his sallow face.

"How?" Damien asked, still utterly confused.

"A tracking charm"

Snape turned to face the one who had spoken. He wasn't at all surprised that Hermione had figured it out. He smiled, for the first time at her, and nodded his head.

"Exactly. The stone is probably the only thing that can hide a tracking spell. As it is engulfed with spells and charms, intended to protect Mr Potter, if anything it will show up as a mass of entangled spells, when the check is done by the Death Eaters. They won't be able to make head or tails of the spells, a tracking charm will be easily hidden among the other spells. The Layhoo Jisteen will not show any of the spells cast on it, as it is usually used to hide powerful spells. If it was any other item, the Death Eaters would take it away and not let it come into the Manor until it was figured out, but everyone knows how desperate the Dark Lord has been to get his precious stone back. They will recognise it instantly and hurry to give it to him. That way the tracking device will be inside and we can easily follow it." Snape finished.

Everyone remained silent as Snape finished his explanation. Damien looked at the stone, running his fingers over the black stone softly. He took a hold of the chain and was about to slip it off and give it to Snape when he was stopped.

"What are you doing?" Dumbledore asked him as he saw that Damien was about to take the pendant off.

"I'm giving this to Professor Snape. He can take it and place the tracking charm on it" Damien answered.

Dumbledore looked uncomfortably at him before turning to Snape. With a sigh, Snape spoke up.

"I'm afraid you can't do that." he said slowly, glancing at the silent forms of James and Lily.

Dumbledore spoke up at the questioning look Damien wore.

"You see, the Layhoo Jisteen will continue to protect you, even if you remove it from yourself. It is bound to you and you alone. Only Harry can remove the spells placed on it. You can't give it to anyone, especially Severus, as the stone will repel his touch because of the dark mark."

"But how are we going to get the stone to Voldemort then?" Ron asked.

"There is only one way. We have to bring Damien to Voldemort" Snape said after a moments pause.

It was as if the air in the room had completely vanished. Everyone was staring hard at Snape.

"Are you mad? Have you completely lost it?" Sirius shouted across the room.

"It's the only way. He can't take the pendant off. We can't give the necklace to anyone else and even polyjuice potion won't work as the Dark Lord will be able to detect its presence. Damien has to come with us?" Snape shouted in response.

Damien vaguely registered the fact that this was the first time Snape had said his first name. His mind was clouded with fear and worry. Would he be able to face Voldemort?

"No! There has to be some other way. I can't risk Damien" James said in a final sort of way.

"Suit yourself, Potter. You can keep your younger son and sacrifice your eldest, since there is no other way to save him." Snape retorted.

Damien came back to his senses and heard the shouting match going on between the adults. Professor Dumbledore was trying to get everyone to calm down but there were just too many emotions around. Frank and Alice were joining in the argument and so was the Weasley family. Damien got up from his chair and walked calmly over to Snape, who had given up the argument and was leaning against the door, looking furious with the rest of them.

"Professor Snape, I'm ready to go with you" Damien said quietly.

His quiet words were heard around the room and everyone stopped their argument. They were all staring at the anguished thirteen year old in shock.

"Damy" Lily began but was cut off by her son.

"I'm going to do this, mum. If this is the only way to get to Harry, then I'm not going to sit back" there was no argumentative tone in his voice. He was merely stating the facts.

Snape looked at the young boy before him, silently marvelling at his bravery. James met Damien's gaze but he could clearly see that Damien was not going to back down. He had lost Harry because he had not allowed him to help save Ginny and Nigel. He knew Damien would go to help Harry, regardless of what anyone was going to say or do. It would be better if he allowed Damien to be a part of this. It would be much safer.

When no more arguments came his way, Snape turned to look at the nervous looking teen before him. He only hoped the boy would be able to do what was required of him.

xxx

Lucius Malfoy paced the floor in anxiety. He had not been able to sit in peace ever since coming back from Voldemort's chamber. He had stood back and watched Harry being tortured! How could he have done that? How could Voldemort order something like that?

'Well, it wasn't as if *he* had to watch Harry being ripped apart!' Lucius thought bitterly.

It was obvious that Voldemort was finding it difficult to hurt Harry, that's why he had left the chamber in a hurry, but Lucius also knew that Voldemort would never let Harry go. He was going to make an example out of Harry. He had to, in order to keep his fear alive in others.

Lucius sighed heavily and sat down. He really didn't want Harry to die. He had hoped that he would have been able to capture him and bring him back to Voldemort while he was searching for the Horcruxes. If only he had managed to capture him before he destroyed all the Horcruxes. Then Voldemort would have simply performed memory charms on him and everyone would have been happy. But Voldemort couldn't do that now. Harry had destroyed all of his Horcruxes, leaving the Dark Lord vulnerable. His immortality was destroyed and Voldemort was going to make Harry regret that severely.

The blond haired Death Eater rubbed at his forehead. He had stood back and watched Bella's soul being devoured by that horrible creature. He had managed to hold back then. He wasn't sure if he would be able to stand back and watch Harry die.

xxx

Harry growled in pain as he pulled out another dagger from his battered body. He let it fall on the ground with a clatter. That was the last one. Harry managed to prop himself up against the wall, breathing heavily. His entire body ached with agonising pain. His mind didn't know what to concentrate on. His leg was broken, his collar bone was shattered as were his ribs. His wrists were bleeding as the shackles he was forced into had bitten into his skin. His back

and torso were still burning with pain and now he had multiple puncture wounds around his body caused by daggers being driven slowly into him by the Death Eaters.

The Death Eaters had just left moments before. They had dragged out the dead bodies of the two Death Eaters Harry had managed to finish off. They had made the mistake of pulling Harry out of the bonds he was in without immobilising him first. Harry had attacked them and had cracked their necks before being ambushed by the rest of the grown men. They kept Harry tied down in shackles after that. Even now Harry had his hands bound together and had just about managed to pull out the daggers the Death Eaters had left in him.

Harry coughed violently, bring up more blood. He spat it out and wearily rested his head on the wall behind him. He wondered how much more torture he was going to be subjected to before Voldemort finished him off.

Harry picked up one of the daggers and looked at it closely. He fought back the tears that emerged when he saw that the daggers actually belonged to him. They were given to him by Voldemort as a gift. Harry had used many of them in combat. Now the Death Eaters had used them on him. He threw the dagger away and fought to keep a grip on himself. He knew this was going to happen. He had thought he was prepared to face this but it tore him apart to be in Riddle Manor and be subjected to so much pain at Voldemort's orders. He had grown up here. This was his home. It was his sanctuary. After all his assignments, Harry had always looked forward to coming back to Riddle Manor and being in company with his father.

Harry's mind began to cloud over as the pain escalated to an unbearable level. Before he passed out, words spoken bitterly to him floated in his mind.

'Do you know what it must have felt like to be tortured and killed in you own home? In your sanctuary?'

The words that Neville had spoken to him when they were in the Longbottom's ruined home came back to Harry.

“Guess I’ll find out soon enough.” Harry murmured to himself before mercifully falling unconscious.

xxx

The plan was forming slowly. It was going to be tricky but it was the only thing that had a chance at succeeding. Snape was going to pretend that he had caught Damien and was bringing him in to Voldemort so that he could take the Layhoo Jisteen from him. The tracking spell was going to be distorted when taken into Riddle Manor due to the wards placed around it, but it should set itself out and go back to being traceable in around twenty to thirty minutes. That meant that Damien would have to stall giving Voldemort the stone for that time so that the Order and the Ministry would be able to get to Riddle Manor and ambush Voldemort before anything happened. Damien had no idea how to do this but they had agreed to work that out later. Everyone thought the plan was risky and a lot could go wrong but without any other alternative it was all they had.

Suddenly Ginny sat up and looked worriedly at Snape.

“How are you going to explain to Voldemort that you captured Damien when the stone doesn’t let you or any other Death Eater near him?” she said.

Everyone looked around at Snape. How could they have not thought about that? Snape looked at Dumbledore and both seemed to wordlessly agree to something. James looked on the verge of shouting at both of them. What was going on?

“I have someone who could help us. It’s really risky but it’s also the only believable explanation we can give to Voldemort.” Dumbledore got up and walked over to the fireplace.

He grabbed a handful of floo powder and threw it into the fire, making green flames leap up at once. He stuck his head in and whispered a name that no one heard. A few moments later he was heard asking someone to come over to the Potter Manor. Dumbledore pulled his head back out of the flames and stood up.

“Will you tell us what’s going on?” James asked angrily. He was tired, worried beyond comprehension and sick to the stomach at the thought of both his sons at Voldemort’s mercy. He wanted to know what was going on.

“I have called someone over to meet you. Now remember, while most of you might not like this person, Harry places his full trust in him. So you should too.”

That was all he could say before a figure stepped through the fireplace. He walked out of the green flames and brushed his black robes, similar to the way Snape did, when he had arrived. He lifted his head to look at the room full of people.

The occupants of the room looked on in utter surprise. They were not expecting him.

“Malfoy!” Damien choked out in shock.

“Actually, it’s just Draco” The blond haired teen responded as he walked further into the room, sweeping everyone with his grey eyes. His eyes rested on Snape and he gave him a questioning look.

“What’s going on?” he directed his question to Snape.

Snape told Draco everything that had happened that day. He had left out the parts about how Harry had suffered. Draco had grown up in the midst of Death Eaters. He didn’t have to be told about how Harry was going to be treated.

Draco’s pale face lost even more colour. He absent-mindedly collapsed in a chair and looked at Dumbledore with terrified eyes.

“What are we going to do now?” he asked and Damien was surprised at how weak and vulnerable he sounded. He knew that Harry and Draco were friends but he never imagined Draco would actually care about Harry. It was an emotion Damien didn’t know Draco had.

“We have a plan to get to him, but we need your help” Snape responded evenly.

Draco paled even more before taking a moment to calm himself down. He looked directly at Snape, ignoring everyone else in the room.

"I'm in." he said, without even hearing what he had to do.

"Wait!" it was Ron who had spoken. His blue eyes narrowed suspiciously at the Slytherin.

"What are you even doing here? Weren't you supposed to leave this place? Why didn't you go?" it was just too suspicious for Draco to still be here when they had heard him saying to Harry that he and his mum were leaving.

Draco looked angrily at him and was about to ignore him when Dumbledore caught his eye. With a sigh Draco answered.

"I was intending to leave. In fact I spent three hours waiting for Harry to meet me. When Harry didn't turn up I...I couldn't leave without knowing what happened to him. That was the day he was caught by Longbottom, which by the way, I still can't believe happened!"

Neville looked sharply at him but the blond Slytherin just brushed him away.

"Stare all you want, Longbottom! You know as well as I do that Harry would have never been caught if he didn't feel guilty about kicking your sorry arse!" Draco resentfully told him. Neville didn't respond.

"If he had, he wouldn't be in this mess today! He would have been far away from all of this and from You-Know-Who!" Draco continued.

"So why didn't you leave?" Ron asked again.

"I would have, but I waited to find out what happened to Harry. After his trial I wanted to see him. He's my best friend. I wanted to bring him back to his senses. He should have left with me. He shouldn't have stayed here when the Death Eaters were after him. But Harry's always been stubborn. He wouldn't listen to me" he said dejectedly.

"You...you spoke to Harry? When did this happen?" James asked, wondering when Harry went outside to meet him.

Chapter Sixty Four

James glanced nervously over at his youngest son as Snape went over the plan, for the final time. He couldn't believe he was allowing his thirteen year old son to take such a risk. But James was lost as to find another way to save Harry. Snape's plan was risky and almost everything could go wrong, but it was the only plan that had even the slightest chance of succeeding.

"Right, is that clear. I'm not going to go over it again." Snape said harshly as both boys looked at him with uneasy expressions.

"The most important thing is timing. We have to play this very carefully. If we go into this too quickly, we'll lose everything" Snape told the room at large. He stood up to leave. He gestured to Draco to join him and teen quickly rushed over to him.

"In a few hours it will be sunrise. I will meet the Minister as soon as he arrives at the Ministry. We all have to join forces. It will take every Auror in the Order and the Ministry to complete this mission." Dumbledore told them.

Dumbledore, Snape and Draco left the Manor, followed by the Longbottom family. Molly had managed to usher the rest of her family and the four teens to bed, telling them that they all needed their strength and should have at least a few hours sleep. However, Arthur and her came back to the living room and sat with Lily, trying to comfort the distraught mother. Remus and Sirius looked like how James was feeling, awful.

James collapsed into a chair. He knew that no one was going to sleep that night. It would be sunrise in a few hours and although every muscle in James' body was aching he knew he couldn't rest. His mind was reeling with what had happened and what was going to happen later that day. He couldn't help thinking that by this time tomorrow, he might have both his sons back with him, safe and sound, or he might lose both of them.

xxx

How Harry had managed to drift off to sleep was a wonder. He had been kept up by the shooting pains running through his body. He figured he must have fallen unconscious at some point. He woke up as he sensed movement near him. He struggled to open his eyes and saw a figure hovering over him. There wasn't much he could do to protect himself as his hands were still bound in shackles, as were his feet. So he just remained where he was, not caring who was with him or what they were going to do to him next.

He was surprised when he felt a hand run under his neck and gently tilt his head upwards. He felt the cool glass touch his parched lips and he realised that someone was offering him water to drink. He tried to drink as much as he could as he was agonizingly thirsty. It was a warm summer's night after all.

Harry pulled away after he couldn't swallow anymore and tried to blink through the darkness to make out who was with him. He knew there was only one person who would help him like this.

"Malfoy" Harry whispered.

A lit wand was held up next to Harry so that he could see the worried face of Lucius Malfoy. He helped Harry to sit up so that he was leaning against the wall. Harry stifled another groan as his torn back scraped the rough wall. He realised that Malfoy must have spelled his shirt back on him as he could feel the soft material against his skin. He mentally thanked him.

"Have some more." Lucius said.

Harry obeyed and drank a little more water and then pulled back to rest his head on the wall behind him.

"I never thought it would come to this." Lucius said sadly and Harry opened his eyes to look at him.

"Neither did I." Harry replied. He shifted against the wall so that he could look at the blond Death Eater.

"But what do I know. It seems I really had no idea what was truly happening around me" Harry said bitterly.

Lucius stilled and for the first time in his life, Harry saw the senior Malfoy look ashamed. He diverted his eyes away from him and dropped his head.

"Harry, you must understand. What happened when you were a kid...we...it had to be done. It was the only way we could ensure that you wouldn't leave us. We never hurt you because we hated you..."

"But you didn't care for me either. If you did, you would have never been able to do all those things to me" Harry interrupted him.

Malfoy didn't respond and instead stared at Harry, not having anything to say in response.

"I don't blame you, though." Harry continued, looking away from him.

"You were only following orders, like...like Bella." Malfoy saw the look of pain on Harry's face as he said Bella's name.

"I only blame one person, the one who's responsible for all of this. He took me from my home, separated me from my parents and then he abused me. He completely broke me. Voldemort is responsible for all of that. He brought me up, pretended to care about me, looked after me and comforted me when I was troubled about my past! When all along he knew that he was the reason I had suffered. He was the one who made me call him 'father' and then hurt me like no parent should!" Harry shouted, tears glistening in his eyes. He refused to let the tears drop though. He had shed too many tears when he was growing up. He wasn't going to shed any more.

"Harry..." Malfoy was cut off again.

"Don't, just don't try and justify yourself. It won't work" Harry said as he closed his eyes again and tried to block out the pain in his battered body.

"I'm not going to try and justify myself. I know that there is not really any point anymore. I just wanted to say that...you know what's in store for you. You know him well enough to know that he won't let you go, even if he really wants to. He'll make an example out of you. Just...please just, don't push him. Don't say anything that will anger

him. Beg if you have to, just make it easier on yourself” Malfoy stopped as he couldn’t bear to think about what was going to happen to Harry soon.

Harry gave a dry laugh and looked at the worried face of Lucius.

“Don’t worry Malfoy, I’m not going to fight him. Even if I had a chance at defeating him, I don’t think I would be able to do hurt him. He may have never cared for me, but I cared for him. You should know me well enough to know that I’m not going to break. No matter what he does, I’m never going to give in to him. I’m never going to beg him for anything!” Harry finished.

It was Malfoy’s turn to smile. He reached over and gently touched Harry’s cheek.

“I knew you would say that.” he said sadly.

Without another word, Malfoy got up and walked away, not turning back to look at the boy he had loved just like a son.

xxx

Snape walked into Riddle Manor as soon as the sun had come up. He had taken Draco back to his Manor and had convinced him to sleep a few hours before the plan came into effect. Whilst the teen had obeyed him and had gone to his room, Snape knew that he would not have slept a wink. He himself had trouble resting. They were planning a huge rescue mission. If anything went wrong, his life along with Draco’s and both Harry and Damien’s, was going to come to a very abrupt and painful end.

Just as Snape neared the doors leading to the chamber belonging to the Death Eaters, he heard someone shouting over at him.

“Snape! Where have you been?”

Snape turned around to see Macnair waking steadily over to him. Snape turned his face to an expressionless mask. He wasn’t very friendly with Macnair.

"I had things to do. Why?" he asked rather abruptly, as he always did when speaking to fellow Death Eaters.

"You just missed out on all the fun! We had that traitor all to ourselves last night!" Macnair responded gleefully.

Snape was very good at hiding his emotions and reactions, so Macnair didn't know that Snape's heart had just missed several beats.

"But, I thought it was the Dark Lord's orders to leave him in the chamber all night. He had told all of us to leave after his punishment" Snape enquired.

"He did, but later on he must have changed his mind. He ordered me and a few of the others to take him to the cells, and do what we liked, as long as he was still breathing at the end of it all." Macnair replied with a smug look on his face.

Snape highly doubted that's what Voldemort had said but he kept quiet.

"So, I take it all of you had fun then?" Snape asked in a tone that was obvious he couldn't care less.

Macnair smirked wickedly at him.

"You know how much we all hate that brat. Strutting around this place like he owned it! All those times I had imagined what it must feel like to make him scream in agony. Well, I found out last night. It was bliss!" Macnair told him happily.

Snape was never into the torture game. He despised it with every fibre of his being. Even when he was a young Death Eater he preferred to just kill and move on with the job. He did what he had to in order to gain Voldemort's trust. Macnair however was a different story. He was on good terms with Nott and both men loved torturing and breaking the prisoners.

"Well, since you had your fun last night, I think it's only fair I get to have a chance as well" Snape said firmly.

Macnair looked at Snape, a surprised look on his face.

“You! But I thought you hated all that. Getting others blood all over you and everything!” he asked.

“I do, but this is an exception. You don’t know how much that brat tormented me at Hogwarts. Now, I get to even the score with him”

Macnair smiled at Snape and quickly made his way to the cells. Snape’s heart was hammering at his insides. If the Death Eaters really did have Harry all to themselves last night, then what state would he be in now? Would there be anything left of him to save?

As they neared the cells, Snape felt his blood run cold as he heard cries of pain and the accompanying sounds of laughter. It seemed some Death Eaters were still with him.

Snape came around the corner and just managed to keep a hold on his mask of indifference. Harry was hanging in the middle of the cell by his bleeding wrists. His shirt had been torn and was now stained with blood and his pants were soaked with blood. He seemed to be on the edge of unconsciousness. There were three Death Eaters surrounding him and they were holding something in their hands. Snape’s stomach turned horribly as he saw what they were holding. They all had red hot pokers in their hands and were taking it in turns to bring them onto the boy’s already bruised body.

Harry screamed again as one of the men held the poker against his back. He was thrashing in agony and Snape felt sick as he knew that Harry’s back was probably still covered in bleeding welts.

When the poker was moved away, Harry slumped forward, taking in ragged breaths. He didn’t get a chance to catch his breath though as another Death Eater brought the red hot poker down on him. The Death Eater smirked evilly before holding the poker against the back of Harry’s knees. Harry’s screams echoed through the cell and Snape felt his heart twist at the sound.

“Look who’s decided to join in the fun!” Macnair announced as he and Snape walked into the cell. The other men acknowledged Snape with a curious look.

“This is going to be fun.” Macnair said and the three men moved away from Harry. One of them handed his poker to Snape. Snape took it and moved carefully to stand before Harry.

Harry opened his pained emerald eyes and looked at Snape. He didn't say anything; Snape doubted he had any energy left in him to do anything but breathe. Snape raised the poker towards Harry's face and watched as the tortured boy flinched away from the poker.

“This is for Hogwarts!” Snape hissed angrily at him.

Harry closed his eyes and prepared himself for the agonising pain he was about to suffer. Instead of feeling the poker come down onto his face, as Harry was expecting, he heard a whispered incantation and the sound of muffled groans.

Harry opened his eyes and saw, to his amazement, that the four Death Eaters were slowly making their way out of the cells. They had dazed looks on their faces and were walking around like they had no idea where they were.

Harry looked over at Snape, who was still standing in front of him, holding the poker in one hand and his wand in the other. He smirked at Harry's confused expression.

“I guess a befuddlement charm isn't as useless as you thought, Mr Potter” he whispered to him.

Harry managed to give Snape an embarrassed, grateful look before his eyes rolled to the back of his head and he passed out.

xxx

Potter Manor was filled with people already. It was only midday but most of the Order was already there, carefully planning their course of action. There was tension in the air as Snape's plan was communicated with the Order. Most objected to using Damien and Draco. It was too much to expect from them. After lengthy debates, it was agreed that there really wasn't any other way.

James tried not to talk to anyone. He had never been so nervous and anxious in his life. He forcefully didn't let himself think about what was happening to Harry right now. He knew that his mind would explode if he did. His son was suffering, the same son that James had fought everyone to get back. The same son he had sworn to protect. He had failed Harry again, and whatever Harry was going through at the hands of Voldemort and his Death Eaters was because of James. He felt responsible. How could he let this happen?

He snapped out of these depressing thoughts as Lily came and sat next to him. She took his hand in hers and looked at him sadly.

"Don't" she whispered softly to him.

"What?" James asked confused at what she meant.

"Don't blame yourself. It's not your fault." She comforted him.

James looked at Lily, wondering how she could read his emotions so well.

"You look the way you did when Wormtail took him. You blamed yourself then as well. We made the mistake of giving up on him then. We won't make the same mistake again. We will get Harry back!" Lily told him with more confidence than she felt.

James wrapped his arms gratefully around his wife. He had not expected her to be as strong as this. He was usually the one to give her comfort, but he gratefully drank in all her words, making himself believe in them.

The floo turned green and James looked up to see two boys emerging from the fireplace. Both James and Lily stood up. They had not been expecting them.

"David! Darrell! What are you two doing here?" Lily asked as she recognised the two brothers.

The two boys brushed their robes and walked over to meet Lily.

"I know that we're not in the Order as of yet and we're not even Aurors, but the world be damned if we sit back and not help Harry. We owe him this much." David said with determination on his face.

Lily didn't know what to say. She knew that Harry was responsible for saving them, but she still applauded the two boys for their bravery. It wasn't going to be easy to fight Voldemort and his Death Eaters and they had to return to the place they were captured and tortured ten years ago. She smiled warmly at both of them before turning around to look at James. Amelia Bones appeared by floo a moment later.

Damien and the other three teens came onto the room. They had been upstairs, away from all the chaos and nerves. It was better for them to be by themselves for a while. They came inside the room just as Fred and George arrived with numerous boxes. Everyone turned to stare at them as the twins struggled to pull out several heavy boxes out of the fireplace.

"No, no don't help! We got it!" Fred shouted in annoyance.

At once Ron and Damien along with David and Darrell rushed over and helped them lift the boxes out of the fireplace.

"What in the name...Fred! George! What is all this?" Molly asked as she looked at them in annoyance.

"What does it look like? It's out merchandise. We've been working on this stuff for a while." George answered as the last box was pulled out of the fireplace.

Molly looked at her twins in disbelief.

"How could you!" she hissed angrily at them.

"At a time like this! How can the both of you be so insensitive? Is this a time to show off your merchandise?" she asked, turning the same colour as her hair.

"Mother, calm down! You've totally misunderstood us. We're not showing off anything. We've brought all our special stuff so that it can

be used against the Death Eaters” Fred told her as he collapsed in a near by chair.

Molly still looked at them angrily.

“But you don’t make weapons. You make joke things. How is that going to help?”

Fred and George both looked over at each other.

“Well, you know how you always used to accuse us of making joke products that were too...dangerous? Well, you were right to worry.” Fred said as he moved to open one of the boxes.

“This is stuff that we’ve been working on for months now, it’s not finished so it is probably quite dangerous. We would never release anything until we brought it down to an acceptable safety level but for use on Death Eaters and other scum, it’s perfect!” George finished.

Everyone in the room was staring at the two boys. They watched as the twins pulled out their products and started showing them how they worked. They had everything from exploding fireworks to acid darts to itching powder that wouldn’t stop the itching, no matter what you did.

“This stuff is great, but why would we need to use this. We’re going to be duelling with our wands” Tonks said as she examined a particularly nasty looking trap with razor sharp teeth.

“Aurors are great at duelling with Death Eaters but the rest of us poor souls need a helping hand when fighting them, especially when dealing with large numbers.” Fred answered.

“Boys, you aren’t coming...” Arthur was cut off as the twins started arguing instantly.

“Oh yes, we are! If the rest of our family is going, including the ones that are younger than us, then we’re sure as hell going as well.” Fred said as he eyed Ron and Ginny.

“Yeah, and besides, he saved our sister’s life, more than once. We’re going to help him” George said. That softened the look on both Arthur and Molly’s face.

Before anything else could be said, the fireplace turned green and Dumbledore emerged. He walked into the room full of people. His blue eyes scanned the room before he addressed all of them.

“I have spoken with the Minister. He wants everyone to head to the Ministry. We will be monitoring the tracking charm from there. Everyone, please make your way there. All the other Aurors will be gathered there.”

Slowly the crowd began to make their way over to the Ministry. James felt his heart beat frantically as he realised that in a few hours, Damien was going to be heading out to Riddle Manor.

He stopped Damien leaving with his friends and wordlessly gathered him in his arms. Damien was looking very pale and however hard he tried he couldn’t get his heart to calm down. His hands were shaking and every time he thought about facing Voldemort, his stomach turned horribly.

“Damy, there’s still time. If you don’t want to go through with this...” James trailed off as he lost his words.

Damien plucked up all his strength and gave his dad a comforting smile.

“It’ll all work out, dad. You’ll see.”

xxx

In all essence the plan was very simple. Snape was going to arrive at the Riddle Manor with Draco and Damien. They were going to hand Damien over to Voldemort as he has the Layhoo Jisteen. The tracking charm placed on the stone will allow the Aurors back at the Ministry to track the location for Riddle Manor. As soon as they got the necessary information, the Aurors would come in full force and ambush Voldemort and his Death Eaters. They could then easily

rescue Harry and have a very good chance at capturing Voldemort as well.

There were only a few minor problems that could easily destroy the whole plan. Firstly, Draco had a huge responsibility as Voldemort didn't trust him. Being Harry's best friend was going to challenge his emotions as he had to proclaim his loyalty to Voldemort and he would have to do it, most likely, in front of Harry. Draco was going to have to use all his occulmency skills to prove to Voldemort that his true loyalties lay with him and not Harry. Lucius Malfoy may also pose as a problem as father and son were not on speaking terms. He could ruin the whole thing as well. But Draco was the only one who could hand Damien over as he didn't have the Dark Mark and so could physically take Damien to Voldemort. The plan was to tell Voldemort that Damien trusted Draco, thinking he was Harry's friend and was going to help him and so ended up getting captured by him.

The second main problem was the timing. The tracking charm was going to get distorted once they all entered the Manor due to the wards placed around it. It would take an estimated time of around twenty minutes or so to set it right. It was agreed to give the charm half an hour to ensure that it definitely worked and that would give the Aurors time to apparate outside the wards of the Manor. That meant that Damien was going to have to stall giving Voldemort the stone for that time. He knew that no one could forcibly take the stone from him so he would be able to control when to hand over the stone. However, Damien also knew that Voldemort would try to force him into handing over the stone and he was probably going to use Harry. Damien wasn't sure about how he was going to handle that. He couldn't bear to think about his brother being tormented and tortured and especially because of him.

The last problem was Damien himself. He had never faced anything of this multitude. Draco and Snape could handle Voldemort, but Damien had only ever faced a few Death Eaters. Even then, he was either protected by the Layhoo Jisteen or by Harry. How he was going to handle facing the Dark Lord was something that was bothering everyone. The success of this mission rested largely on Damien. If he handed the stone over too quickly, everything would be ruined. The Aurors needed time to get the location and to travel there.

If Damien handed over the stone before the location was worked out, then the Aurors would get there too late to save anyone.

Damien kept going over that detail in his head as he walked up the steep hill, leading to Riddle Manor. He had to keep his wits about him if this was going to work. He was walking behind Draco, trying not to trip on the uneven ground. Snape was walking behind him, wand trained on him. Damien's hands were bound in shackles that he had placed on himself. A short chain was attached to them and the other end was in Draco's hand. They had to do this the right way. Death Eaters were going to be watching them; they couldn't afford to make any mistakes.

They had waited for it to be dark before heading out the Manor. It was well into the night by the time they had left the Ministry. The sun had disappeared and shadows engulfed everything in sight. The darker it was the better for the Aurors. It would give them an advantage.

Damien shivered even though it was a warm night. His heart hammered against his Adam's apple and his legs trembled under him. He didn't have to act like he was afraid; he was utterly terrified of facing Voldemort. Snape moved in front of Draco, as the Death Eaters at the main doors had targeted Draco the moment he appeared.

Snape spoke to them in hushed voices and then gestured to Draco. On cue, Draco tugged hard on the chain and pulled Damien roughly towards the doors. The Death Eaters looked at Damien and their eyes instantly travelled to the black stoned pendant around his neck. Damien tried hard not to shudder at the way the two men were looking at him. They were looking at him with so much hatred and anger.

Damien stood still as the two Death Eaters ran their wands over him. As expected, the wands lit up a multitude of colours as they passed over the pendant. The Death Eaters looked uncertain but moved to check Draco and Snape in the same manner. Once satisfied with their checks the two men moved to let them walk through the doors.

The words that Snape had spoken to him, moments before apparating to the Manor grounds, rang through Damien's head.

‘Once you’re inside, you’re on your own. Draco and I can’t interfere when we’re with Voldemort. You must only give over the pendant when it is time. Wait for my signal. The success of this rests solely with you.’

xxx

Tension was in the air as Dumbledore sat, concentrating on the tracking charm. James was glad that it was Dumbledore who was monitoring the tracking. He didn’t quite trust anyone else. The room that they were in was full with people, but it was strangely quiet. No one wanted to make a single sound, afraid to break Dumbledore’s concentration.

James felt like his throat was squeezed shut. His heart continued to hammer at his insides. He had sent his thirteen year old son with Snape and Draco to Voldemort’s home. His mind was screaming at him that something was going to go wrong.

James cast a wary glance over the occupants of the room. Everyone seemed nervous and tense. For some, like Remus, Sirius, The Weasley family and the Longbottoms, it was understandable. They were all connected to Harry and cared deeply for him. For others, it was the mere idea of ambushing Voldemort in his own home that was causing all the nervousness.

James was brought out of his thoughts when Dumbledore looked up and spoke, for the first time since coming to the Ministry.

“The tracking charm has now become distorted. They’re inside Riddle Manor.”

xxx

Damien didn’t have the chance to observe his surroundings when he entered the Manor. It looked just as big as Hogwarts but it had a sense of dread about it. Damien was sure that if he had come here during the day, it would still be draped in darkness. He couldn’t imagine Harry growing up here. It seemed so dead and cut off from the rest of the world.

He stumbled forward as Draco pulled at his chain again. Damien scowled at him but kept on walking. He was secretly very impressed with Draco. The young Slytherin had arranged his features into a perfect expressionless mask. His eyes seemed cold and devoid of any emotion, even though Damien knew that he was just as terrified as he himself was.

Snape looked like he did when walking along the corridors of Hogwarts, giving out detentions to students. Damien saw the oak doors leading to Voldemort's chamber and felt his stomach clench up. He took a deep breath and told himself that he could do this. He could handle this.

The doors opened and Damien walked into the chamber belonging to the darkest wizard of their time.

Voldemort was sitting in his throne like chair and didn't react as the three wizards entered his chamber. Damien felt his breath hitch in his chest as he looked at Voldemort. He had seen his pictures many, many times in the Daily Prophet and other various newspapers. But it was one thing to see someone in a picture and completely another thing to be standing before him.

Damien remembered Snape giving them instructions about what to do when they were in Voldemort's presence. He had told Draco to 'use every ounce of your Occulmency skills, every technique you have learned'. He had then turned to Damien and looked at him for a moment, lost as to what to say to him. 'Just, don't make any eye contact with him,' he said. 'That's not a problem' Damien had whispered to himself. He didn't want to look at him anyway.

Damien felt himself being pulled violently and realised that Snape and Draco were kneeling before Voldemort. Draco had pulled hard on the chain, forcing Damien onto his knees as well. Damien stayed there, too afraid to move.

"Explain yourselves" commanded the cold voice.

Snape launched into the explanation and Damien tried to pay attention to what he was saying but his mind was concentrating on looking for Harry. He couldn't see him anywhere. Didn't Snape say

Harry was being kept in Voldemort's chamber? That meant he should be here somewhere.

Draco stood up when commanded by Voldemort and Damien marvelled at how calm he was. Draco was finding it very hard to stand on his own two feet. They trembled under him and he could feel Voldemort's gaze burning into him. He had also spotted his father looking at him with shock. He ignored his father and focused everything he had into keeping his mind shields in place.

"So, you have decided to come back to me?" Voldemort asked, in a bitter tone and Damien could tell how much Voldemort disliked him.

"My, Lord. I had never left you. I was always your faithful servant." Draco said as he bowed deeply before him.

Voldemort slowly stood from his chair and took a step near them. Damien felt his heart explode in his chest. 'Oh God, just stay where you are. Please just stay away!' his mind screamed.

"You expect me to believe you when you have never shown me any loyalty" Voldemort hissed in anger.

Draco was momentarily lost as to what to say but he regained his composure quickly. Holding his mind shields firmly in place, he responded.

"My Lord, I apologise for my behaviour. I would get carried away with Harry...with him. I meant you no disrespect. I could never dream of disrespecting you. My family have been in your service and I would want nothing more than to follow in their footsteps."

Voldemort didn't respond to anything Draco had said. He continued to scrutinise Draco with his ruby red eyes. Draco didn't let his mask slip as he tugged hard on the chain making Damien leap up onto his feet.

"My Lord, I have brought you something to show my loyalty." Draco grabbed Damien roughly and thrust him before Voldemort. Damien didn't dare look up at Voldemort. He kept his gaze fixed at the ground.

Voldemort had recognised Damien the moment he was brought into the room. He remembered seeing him in Nott's memories. He remembered how the spells, Nott had sent at him, had deflected and disappeared. He looked intently at the trembling boy before him. He didn't look remotely powerful enough to perform any sort of spell that would result in spells being wandlessly deflected.

"He has something that belongs to you, My Lord. I am afraid I was unable to take it from him, so that is why I had to bring him to you." Draco finished.

Damien looked up as Voldemort moved closer to him. Draco pulled at the robes Damien was wearing so that the black stoned pendant was visible. Voldemort's reaction was terrifying. His red eyes seem to sparkle with anger and he instinctively reached out to grab Damien. Voldemort didn't get thrown back like Snape had. He had reached towards him but then pulled his hand away as if he had been burned. He looked murderously at him making Damien's legs tremble under him.

"Harry!" Voldemort whispered. He figured out what Harry had done. He had stolen the Layhoo Jisteen and used it to protect this boy. He had taken his precious stone and had tainted it with such a pathetic use. Voldemort spun around to look at two Death Eaters situated at the rear doors.

"Bring him!" he hissed angrily and Damien felt his heart leap.

The two men bowed and left hurriedly to obey their master. They came back almost instantly and Damien couldn't stop the cry that left him as they dragged the bloodied form of Harry back with them. They tossed him onto the ground and stood on either side of him, wands trained on him.

Harry just lay there. He didn't attempt to sit up or even look up to see where he was. Damien felt tears sting his eyes as he looked at the broken form of his brother. Harry's clothes were stained with blood, his hands and wrists were bleeding and through the torn shirt, Harry was wearing, Damien could see deep welts and angry burns covering his back. He couldn't stop looking at him. He wanted to run to him, to

help him but he knew he wouldn't be allowed to. He tore his gaze away and looked at Voldemort.

It was a strange sight. Damien expected Voldemort to have a smirk or even a sneer on his face as he looked at Harry. He expected the evil wizard to gloat about how he had tortured him and how he had broken him. But instead Voldemort was looking at Harry with hurt and, strange as it was, regret. Damien didn't understand why. It was on Voldemort's orders that this was done to Harry. He had suffered because Voldemort had commanded it so. Why was he looking at Harry like that?

Harry groaned and brought his hand to his forehead. Damien saw Harry grip at his scar and a pained whimper left him. Damien knew that Voldemort was upset, for whatever reason, at Harry's condition and that was why Harry's scar was hurting.

Voldemort seemed to snap out of his thoughts and gestured to the two men standing at either side of Harry. They reached down and pulled Harry roughly so that he was forced onto his knees. Harry hissed at the pain that erupted in his body. He wearily opened his eyes and tried to force them into focusing where he was. He knew that he was with Voldemort again. The pain in his scar was witness to that.

Harry thought that he was brought down to Voldemort's chamber because he had finally decided to kill him. They had tortured him for twenty four hours now, maybe Voldemort was just going to finish him off.

Harry's blurry eyesight cleared up and he saw the strange sight before him. He noticed Draco first. His friend was staring at him with a cold expression. His face showed no concern as he stared at Harry. Harry was confused. 'What the hell was Draco doing here? Did he want to get himself killed?'

That was when Harry noticed the chain in Draco's hand. Harry's eyes followed the chain and landed on a face he had never thought he would see in Riddle Manor. Harry's laboured breath hitched in his chest as his eyes landed on his brother.

'Damien! Oh god, why was Damien here?' Harry's panicked mind was screaming at him. He didn't understand what was going on until he saw the chain connecting Damien and Draco again. Then horrible understanding filled him and Harry looked at his best friend in disbelief.

"Draco" Harry managed to utter in shock.

Draco only smirked at Harry in response. Inside, Draco was breaking. He couldn't stand the look Harry was giving him right now. After all the betrayal Harry had been through in his life, this one was surely going to break him. But Draco kept a tight hold on his emotions. He was a Slytherin. He could bury his emotions deep within him and do what was necessary to get out of this.

"Why?" Harry asked in a hoarse voice.

"It should be obvious. You should have known better than to have thought that I would value friendship over protection." Draco answered, his words dripping with venom.

"Why should I go against everything I was brought up with to join the losing side? I want to have power and you above everyone should know that Malfoy's would do anything to get it." he continued.

The hurt in Harry's eyes turned to rage and he struggled to reach over and grab the Slytherin. The Death Eaters grabbed onto Harry to hold him back, even though there wasn't much Harry could do in the state he was in.

Draco only smirked back at Harry, further fuelling Harry's anger.

Voldemort turned around to face Harry, fury gleaming in his eyes.

"I should have known that you would use my Layhoo Jisteen for a purpose such as this!" he said angrily as he gestured towards Damien.

Harry's panicked emerald eyes darted from Damien to Voldemort.

The Dark Lord moved to stand directly before Damien. He waved his hand so that the shackles restraining the boy fell away at once. Damien looked startled but quickly looked away from Voldemort.

“You have a possession of mine. It doesn’t belong to you. I want you to return it to me” Voldemort instructed.

He conjured a wooden box and held it in his hand. He knew he wouldn’t be able to touch the pendant, even after it had been removed from the boy. He would have to make Harry reverse all the spells he had placed on them.

Damien felt his body go numb with terror. This was it. He had to stall giving him the stone. He vaguely wondered how much time had passed since he came into the Manor. It felt like hours to him. But he knew it couldn’t be as Snape was yet to give him the signal.

Damien moved his hand over to touch the stone. Even at a time like this, Damien felt his body and mind relax as his fingers came in contact with the stone.

“I’m not accustomed to repeating myself!” a cold voice rang out and Damien’s heart leapt at the sound. Voldemort was still standing with the box held in his hand.

Damien moved his hand to take off the pendant, he wasn’t going to hand it over just yet, he was just going to remove it from his neck.

“Damien, No!”

Damien stopped as Harry shouted over at him. Harry was still being restrained by the two Death Eaters and Damien was sure that Harry wasn’t even able to stand by himself but that wasn’t stopping him from trying to free himself.

Harry struggled to get out of the strong grip the Death Eaters had on him. His entire body ached horribly and he knew that his legs were useless as they were broken. But he couldn’t stop himself. Damien couldn’t take off the pendant. He wouldn’t be protected anymore. The stone would still be bound to him but it would not protect Damien if it wasn’t in contact with him.

“Damy! You swore you wouldn’t take it off!” Harry yelled desperately.

Damien was looking at Harry through tear filled eyes. Harry was so intent on protecting him that even at a time like this he was more concerned with his brother’s safety rather than his own.

“Hand over the pendant before I’m forced to make you” Voldemort whispered in a deadly voice. He was completely ignoring Harry.

“You can’t force me” Damien knew he had crossed the line even as he spoke the words. He stood his ground firmly but cringed as Voldemort’s gaze burned into him.

Without saying another word, Voldemort turned to his Death Eaters and gestured something. Damien watched as the men threw Harry violently onto the ground and cast the Crucio curse on him.

Harry’s screams bounced off the walls and Damien felt Harry’s screams rip through him. He was responsible for this. He wanted to rip away the pendant and throw it at Voldemort, but a small part of his mind kept telling him that it was all going to be over soon. This was the hardest bit of the plan. He had to wait it out.

The curse was lifted and Harry choked back his cries. He lay on the ground, panting for air and trying to get his limbs to stop shaking. Damien still didn’t move to take off the pendant. He saw Voldemort gesture again and the other Death Eater cast the torture curse again. Damien cried out this time as Harry convulsed in sheer agony on the ground before him.

When the curse lifted this time, Damien was already reaching over to take off the necklace. He didn’t think Harry could survive any more curses. He realised that he had tears running down his face as he took off the necklace.

“D-Damy!” Harry gasped. Damien looked over at Harry, sobs escaping him freely now as he looked at his big brother.

“P-please don’t” Harry said painfully. It hurt to even speak.

“I’m sorry, Harry” Damien said through his sobs.

His hands were shaking. He knew that Snape had not given him the signal yet, but he had to do something to keep the curses away from Harry. Damien walked over to Voldemort, he could actually feel Snape and Draco glaring at him but he wasn't going to stand back and let Harry suffer anymore.

He stood as close to the Dark Lord as he could. He was clutching the pendant tightly in his hand. The fear he had for Voldemort had evaporated. He now felt nothing other than pure hatred. He had brought Harry up. He had called him 'son' and now he had ordered him to be tortured like this.

Damien looked over at the box and then looked at Voldemort.

"You can have this, I don't need it. I want you to know something though. When Harry first came to us, he spoke about you like any son would. He remained loyal to you, even after he learned the truth about you. He destroyed your Horcruxes, yes, but he still never wanted to destroy you! If he had, you would have been found by the Ministry long ago. Even after coming back to his family, Harry remained your son. I guess you never learned how to be a father. If you had, you would never have failed."

Damien was so lost in his anger, he didn't even acknowledge the fact that had Voldemort been able to, he would have killed him before he had even finished speaking. Since Damien was still holding the Layhoo Jisteen, Voldemort couldn't hurt him. He was glaring at him in rage but Damien knew he had struck a nerve. Just then, the words Damien had been longing to hear came.

"Mr Potter, do as your told!"

Snape had given the signal. Those were the words they had agreed on. They were words that were spoken to Damien on a daily basis when he was at Hogwarts. Damien felt relief flood him as he realised that his dad along with the rest of the Aurors were here.

He smiled bitterly at Voldemort before dropping the pendant into the wooden box. He heard Harry's horrified gasp at the sound of the black stoned pendant hitting the bottom of the box.

Voldemort closed the box and carefully placed it inside his robes. He looked at Damien with so much rage. He pointed his wand at him just as Harry started to yell desperately at him.

“Voldemort, don’t, please! Please, let him go!” Harry was begging as tears sprung in his eyes. He knew it was futile to beg him, Voldemort knew nothing about mercy, but Harry was lost as to what he could do.

Just a few steps away, Lucius Malfoy felt his heart twist as he heard Harry begging Voldemort. He remembered what Harry had said only that morning. That he was not going to beg Voldemort for anything. He had wished that Harry had been able to hold onto that small part of his dignity but it was not to be.

“Please, let him go! Just leave him out of this!” Harry cried out desperately as he struggled in the Death Eaters grip.

“You should have left him out of this! This is your doing, not mine.” Voldemort hissed angrily.

Snape and Draco had secretly taken out their wands and were ready to use it should the need arise. Snape was cursing in his mind. Where the hell were those imbecile Aurors? How long did it take to get here?

Voldemort raised his wand and pointed directly at Damien’s heart, ready to take the teens life.

“Voldemort! No!” Harry shouted just as Voldemort prepared to strike him.

Before he could utter the words though, a terrific blast sounded throughout the chamber. The Death Eaters all scrambled for cover as the doors, windows and walls were blasted apart and a stream of blue robed Aurors filled the chamber. Snape and Draco had whipped out their wands and were aiming it at Voldemort. Damien, having taken the chance to get away from Voldemort, stumbled back and was instantly sheltered by Snape and Draco. They stood in front of him, protecting him from any curses.

Harry watched in shock as every Auror that existed piled into Voldemort's chamber. His eyes rested on Damien who was being sheltered by Draco. Harry's eyes met Draco's and the Slytherin looked apologetically at him. He desperately wanted Harry to understand why he had acted the way he did. Harry understood that it was an act. It was a plan to get the Aurors here. It seemed that Voldemort understood the act as well. Harry felt his scar explode in unbearable pain and he clenched his teeth hard not to cry out. The grip on him tightened as the Death Eaters aimed their wands on Harry and twisted him up so that he was pulled back painfully onto his knees.

Harry saw his dad and his mum along with Sirius and Remus standing near the forefront, wands aimed at Voldemort. James looked around the chamber, eyes searching for Harry. He spotted him and he struggled not to cry out in horror.

Harry looked at his dad as well, trying hard to grip at his emotions. He had honestly thought he would never see him again. Harry blinked away the tears that had appeared as the pain in his scar worsened. He saw Ron, Hermione and Ginny standing among the crowd of Aurors. He could also make out Frank, Alice and even Neville.

Harry felt dangerously close to passing out from pain. His scar was truly on fire and he couldn't stop the moans escaping him anymore.

Sirius and Remus aimed their wands at the Death Eaters holding Harry. Sirius only gestured to them to let Harry go and the Death Eaters, who were horribly outnumbered, released Harry from their bruising grip. Harry fell to the ground, hissing at the pain that was blinding him. Sirius and Remus quickly began making their way towards Harry.

Voldemort surveyed the mass of Aurors standing in his home; wands all trained on him and his Death Eaters. He felt his rage boil over as he saw Snape and Draco point their wands at him as well. He had been tricked!

From the front of the crowd a tall wizard emerged, wand held in his hand but not aiming at anyone. Voldemort stood to his full height as his former Professor stood before him. Dumbledore looked at

Voldemort with a hint of sadness. He had never thought the small boy he had brought from the orphanage would grow to become this. Obsessed with power and submersed deeply in dark magic, the orphan Tom Riddle had become the monster, Voldemort.

"It's over, Tom" Dumbledore said quietly.

Voldemort looked at Dumbledore in fury. His eyes scanned the room and he knew that he was outnumbered. Without his Horcruxes, he couldn't risk getting hit by the Killing curse. His eyes rested on Dumbledore again.

"Not yet!" he hissed at him.

Voldemort hand extended towards the fallen form of Harry. Before anyone could react and before Sirius could grab him, Harry got pulled towards Voldemort. Harry flew through the air and landed straight into Voldemort's outstretched arms. As soon as Voldemort had grabbed Harry, both disappeared instantly.

James and a few others had sent spells at Voldemort instinctively but the Dark Lord had disappeared before any of them had hit him. The surrounding Death Eaters took the chance and most managed to apparate away as well. Only a few Death Eaters had been arrested and restrained.

James stood with his wand still pointing at the spot Voldemort had been standing in. He was gone! He had taken Harry with him! Voldemort knew everything was over but he wasn't going to give up until he had taken his revenge.

It seemed that Voldemort could control his wards a lot better than everyone thought. He must have disabled the anti-appartation wards when he saw the attack happening. That was why he had not moved when the attack happened. He had stood in the exact spot he had been in, because he was disabling the wards with his mind so that he could get away.

There was blind panic all around them. The Aurors couldn't believe Voldemort had managed to slip through their fingers and had taken Harry with him. Most of the Death Eaters had been quick to follow

and had left as well before the Aurors could stop them. The many spells that had been fired by them had managed to hit only a few Death Eaters.

“What do we do now?” James heard someone yell.

James looked up and saw Lucius Malfoy looking at him. He had not even attempted to apparate away. He was standing in the same spot he had been in and wasn't paying the slightest of attention to the Auror who was pointing his wand at him and demanding that Lucius dropped his own wand. He looked at James with the same fear in his eyes that James felt within himself.

“Hogsmeade” Lucius whispered to him before striking the Auror and disappearing himself.

“Everyone! Get to Hogsmeade, Now!” James yelled and prepared to apparate. Voldemort was going to fulfil his promise. He had taken Harry to the Black tomb.

xxx

Harry slammed to the ground as they arrived in Hogsmeade. He felt all the breath being knocked out of him. The Death Eaters that had appeared had started to fire spells around them so that the people of Hogsmeade would come out and see what was going on.

Voldemort reached down and without thinking, he grabbed Harry from the collar of his shirt and began dragging him through the town of Hogsmeade.

Harry gasped as pain exploded in his battered body. He tried to wrench himself out of Voldemort's grip but he couldn't manage to free himself. Harry couldn't see where he was being dragged to and could only cry out as the ground cut into him. Suddenly he felt sharp edges of stone cutting into him and he realised that he was being dragged up a set of stairs.

Harry tried to get up, if only his legs would obey him, but all Harry did was aggravate the pain pulsing through him. He felt himself being thrown onto the ground and he took the moment to catch his breath.

His entire body throbbed with pain. Wearily he opened his eyes and felt all his breath leave him.

He was at the foot of a large black tomb. The headstone stood tall and Harry's name shone brightly in the night. Harry had seen the picture of the tomb in the Daily Prophet but it still filled him with cold dread. He looked desperately around him. He didn't want to die like this! He didn't want to be buried alive! He gritted his teeth and tried to get up but he couldn't move due to all of his injuries. His scar was still burning and aching and was making Harry feel like he was going to pass out soon.

The residents of Hogsmeade were forced out of their homes so that they could witness Voldemort taking his revenge. Harry saw Voldemort angrily levitate the top of the tomb open. Harry felt true fear grip at him. Voldemort was actually going to bury him alive! Harry had not truly believed Voldemort could do that to him.

Voldemort turned his wand on Harry and levitated him off the ground. Harry felt himself being painfully pulled from the ground. He could see the terrified people of Hogsmeade looking at him with open mouths. Harry felt himself being moved over the mouth of the tomb. He knew it was futile to struggle. He wouldn't be able to break through the spell, even if he was uninjured. His panicked emerald eyes met Voldemort's. Harry hung awkwardly in mid air as Voldemort stared at him.

"You brought this on yourself" Voldemort told Harry in a very controlled voice. Harry couldn't respond. He was being held too firmly to be able to do anything.

Just before Voldemort dropped Harry into the tomb, a blast was heard and the air was full of angry voices shouting out spells. Harry saw the Aurors apparating and attacking the Death Eaters. Voldemort stood still, not lowering Harry into the tomb but not releasing him from the painful grip of the spell either.

Voldemort saw James, Lily and a handful of other Aurors rushing frantically towards them. Before they could reach the stairs leading them to the tomb they crashed against an invisible wall and fell back. James' hazel eyes were filled with terror as he saw what Voldemort was doing.

The Aurors began throwing spells at the invisible wall, trying to get through it and get to Harry. No matter what spell they used, they couldn't get through the barrier that Voldemort had set up.

Voldemort still stood with Harry hanging in mid air, allowing everyone around them to see Harry struggling silently in pain. Harry clamped his eyes shut and tried to ignore the humiliation washing over him.

Dumbledore suddenly appeared next to Lily and tried as well to break through the barrier. He wasn't successful either. He tried reasoning with Voldemort.

"You don't want to do this, Tom! You don't want to kill Harry." Dumbledore shouted over at him.

Voldemort brought his angry red eyes over at Harry.

"You're right" he whispered, more to Harry than to Dumbledore.

"I don't want to do this. Not without you saying a proper goodbye" he finished. He threw Harry's levitated form away from the tomb and Harry went tumbling down the stairs.

Lily let out a cry as she saw her son come crashing down the concrete steps. Harry landed in a heap at the foot of the stairs, only a few steps away from his parents. James felt his heart leap into his mouth as Harry lay motionless on the ground.

James tried to get through the barrier. Furiously, he threw spell after spell at it but it made no difference. Voldemort appeared next to Harry's fallen form.

"I really didn't want to do this! I wanted to give him a future! A future full of power. Every witch and wizard would have bowed before him, but you took him away from all that! You are responsible for this" Voldemort shouted at James and Dumbledore.

"I'm going to rectify the mistake I made all those years ago. I should have killed him the first time I laid eyes on him!" he continued.

He pointed his wand at Harry ignoring the furious and desperate attack by the Aurors, trying to break the barrier using other spells.

“I’m going to take back everything I gave him! That way when I kill him, I won’t be killing the boy I brought up. I would be killing Harry Potter!” he spat angrily.

Just before Voldemort said the incantation, he stopped as Harry opened his emerald eyes and looked at him. Voldemort remembered the night he had raised his wand at a one year old Harry and had deflected the curse because of the way the child had looked at him. Voldemort felt his hand tremble as Harry’s piercing gaze fell on him. ‘No, I won’t make the same mistake!’ Voldemort told himself.

Voldemort uttered the curse and James cried out at once. He knew what curse Voldemort had sent at Harry. It was the Markilene curse, the same curse that Voldemort had hit him with. It was the same curse that had stripped him of his magic and had nearly killed him. That was what Voldemort meant by ‘take back what I gave him’. He was going to strip Harry of his powers!

The jet of blinding light came from Voldemort’s wand and travelled towards Harry who had closed his eyes as not to see it coming at him. All the Aurors, including Dumbledore attacked the invisible wall, trying desperately to save Harry. The spell thundered over to Harry but seconds before hitting him, it suddenly stopped.

Everyone, including Voldemort stared hard as the jet of light seemed to shudder before turning into a wisp of smoke. James looked around to see if someone had managed to get through the barrier and block the curse. But no one seemed to know what was going on. Harry was still lying motionless on the ground and seemed to be unaware of what was happening around him.

Voldemort still had his wand pointing at Harry but was in shock over what happened. The curse had been blocked, but how?

As James and Lily watched, a faint light seemed to enclose over Harry. It began to get brighter and brighter until Harry was lost in a ball of blinding light. James gasped as he caught sight of Harry in the middle of the light. The welts and burns on Harry’s back started to

fade away. James could see Harry's legs straighten out as they too were undoubtedly healed. Harry stirred as his numerous injuries were all healed.

James didn't know what was happening. Who was helping Harry? Who was healing him and how were they managing to do it? In answer to his questions, he heard a sound that made everything clear. He heard Lily next to him gasp loudly as she too heard the sound and came to the same conclusion as he did. Both parents looked at each other as understanding dawned on them. They could hear the faint sound of chimes ringing through the town.

The clock had struck twelve. Harry had come of age.

xxx

Voldemort stood in complete shock as the ball of light encircling Harry brightened until no one could look directly at it. It finally faded away and in the place where Harry had been lying in a pool of his own blood, stood a perfectly healed Harry. The blood that had dried on his clothes was still there but no trace of any injury was left on Harry's body. Harry looked directly over at Voldemort and his green eyes flashed an intense green before going back to their normal emerald green.

He cocked his head to one side as he stared at him.

"You were saying?" he asked.

Voldemort let out a snarl of anger and sent a curse at him but Harry had already moved out of the way. Harry didn't have a wand and it seemed he didn't need one either. Harry curled his fingers into a ball, like forming a punch. He opened his hand and a ball of red light was sitting in his hand. Harry sent it at Voldemort who was struck in the chest and was sent flying backwards.

Harry looked over at the barrier and raised his hand. He brought it down violently, making a slashing motion. A tear appeared in the air and it crackled with magical energy. At once Dumbledore and Moody held onto the tear with their wands and managed to pull it apart, successfully ripping the barrier apart.

Voldemort had gotten back on his feet. He looked furious with the turn of events. He aimed another curse at Harry but again, Harry had thrown himself out of harms way. The Aurors came charging at Voldemort just as a swarm of Death Eaters came and a furious battle broke out. Most of the Aurors were trying get to Voldemort but even five Aurors simultaneously throwing curses at him, didn't manage to bring him down. Voldemort blasted most of them away.

There were curses flying everywhere. James, Sirius and Remus tried desperately to get to Harry, to get him out of here, but they couldn't get to him as the Death Eaters attacked them with vigour.

Harry wasn't planning on going anywhere. All his horrendous injuries had been healed. He felt the air around him crackle with magical energy. Harry had never felt his wandless magic obey him so readily. Harry had been distracted with the attack by the Death Eaters and didn't know where Voldemort was.

Harry managed to block the curses flying at him and was fighting the Death Eaters effortlessly. Suddenly there was a loud explosion and the dark night was lit up as an enormous colourful wheel of fireworks came belting towards a large group of Death Eaters and knocked over most of them.

Harry spun around to see the Weasley twins setting off more fireworks as Ron, Hermione and Neville hit surrounding Death Eaters with, what looked like potion vials. The screams that left the targeted men proved to Harry that the vials were filled with acid as opposed to potions.

Most of the Death Eaters just ran from Harry, not wanting to fight him. It seemed they hadn't forgotten what the Dark Prince was capable of.

Harry saw Macnair fighting another Auror and felt the anger inside him boil over. He had suffered so much at his hands. In a flash, Harry was standing before Macnair. The Death Eater seemed to lose his nerve as Harry stood before him.

Without uttering a single curse, Harry sent Macnair flying through the air. Macnair crashed through a wooden fence and fell to the ground. Harry was instantly towering over him. He picked him up from the

collar of his robes and smashed his fist into Macnair's face, making the fully grown adult groan in pain. Harry pulled away from him and kicked him in the gut before swinging his foot around and smashing it into the Death Eater's stomach.

Macnair was completely winded. His wand lay at Harry's feet, completely forgotten about. He tried to throw a punch at Harry but Harry easily blocked him and sent a jaw breaking punch his way. Harry spun around and kicked him again, sending the man flying across the grounds. There was a horrible sound as Macnair landed on a part of the broken wooden fence. A large piece of wood stabbed Macnair through the stomach, Macnair toppled over and fell to the ground, dead.

The battle was intense but it wasn't going to last long. The Death Eaters were greatly outnumbered. Voldemort struck down another Auror before surveying the scene before him. He was losing! Most of his Death Eaters had been killed and the ones that had survived had been arrested by the Aurors. Fury pulsed in him as he realised he had lost. The Aurors were still fighting furiously. His red eyes met Harry's and he stilled as he saw him across the grounds.

A stray spell came over and hit Voldemort and the Dark Lord fell to the ground. Harry watched as Voldemort was instantly back on his feet, a snarl on his face. Harry realised that his scar prickled with pain but didn't blind him as it would have normally. He didn't have time to wonder about that though as he saw Voldemort suddenly catch sight of someone and turn to look back at Harry, a twisted smile on his face. Harry looked over to see what Voldemort had seen and felt his heart jump into his mouth. Damien had his back to Voldemort and was fighting heatedly with another Death Eater.

Harry felt panic close around him as he saw Voldemort raise his wand and point at an unsuspecting Damien. Harry also raised his hand, intending to push Damien out of the way. He could blast Damien away from the path of the curse, as he had done when the Hogwarts Express had been attacked.

Damien had just defeated the Death Eater and had turned around to face Voldemort. Harry's panicked mind was trying to force everything else out so that he could pull Damien away from harm.

Harry saw everything happen as if in slow motion. He saw the jet of green light thunder out of Voldemort's wand and speed towards Damien, just as Damien turned around. Before Harry's wandless 'Accio' curse could reach Damien, the killing curse hit him straight in the chest. Harry felt his world crash around him as he saw Damien being struck with the killing curse. The force of Voldemort's 'Avada Kedavra' knocked Damien off his feet. Harry watched in dumb disbelief, as Damien's body flew backwards and crashed to the ground. For a moment Harry thought the thirteen year old would get back up. Harry's eyes were fixed on the motionless body of his brother, willing him to get back up. But Harry knew no one got back up after being struck by the killing curse.

Harry didn't know what happened after that. It was as if everyone around him vanished and it was just him and Voldemort left on the battlefield. Harry's eyes were filled with angry tears as he locked his gaze with Voldemort. The Dark Lord pointed his wand at Harry, but Harry barely noticed. He couldn't hear anything, sense anything but burning rage as he looked at Voldemort.

'He killed Damien!'

That was the only thought in Harry's mind. It felt as if a tidal wave crashed over him as he thought about what he had lost. His rage filled eyes burned into Voldemort. All Harry felt at that moment was pure, unadulterated anger towards Voldemort.

Voldemort was about to cast another killing curse, this time aimed at Harry, but he suddenly stopped. Harry's green eyes turned black, a deep intense black. Harry raised his hand again and let out a piercing, rage filled yell. Voldemort suddenly dropped his wand and grabbed at his heart. His red eyes widened with pain. He looked at Harry with disbelief before both Harry and Voldemort let out agony filled screams. Harry grabbed at his forehead and collapsed onto his knees, crying out in pain. He heard Voldemort's cries as well and with

difficulty, looked up at him. The sight was one that would never leave him.

Voldemort was still standing in the same spot but was screaming in agony. His entire body was engulfed in flames. Harry watched horrified at the sight, as Voldemort continued to burn and scream in pain. The pain in Harry's scar was of an intensity he had never felt before. Harry grabbed onto his head and cried in agonising pain. Then all of a sudden the fire extinguished and Voldemort disintegrated to the ground, nothing left of him but ashes.

The pain in Harry's scar began to ebb away. Harry opened his bloodshot eyes and shakily looked over at what remained of the Dark Lord. He was numbly aware that the battle behind him had now stopped. Everyone had heard Voldemort's screams and had seen what happened to him. Harry didn't care though. He got back up on his feet but fell to the ground again as his trembling legs wouldn't support him. Harry stumbled to where the body of his brother was lying.

With tears running down his face, Harry slowly pulled Damien onto his lap. Damien's eyes were closed and Harry noticed that he was still holding his wand. Harry slowly pushed Damien's bangs out of his eyes and gently touched his cheek. Harry let the sobs break out of him as he held Damien close to his chest. He cried like he had when he had lost Bella, but this felt much, much worse. He cried and clung onto his brother, blaming himself for not being able to save him.

"Hey, w-what's with all the h-hugs?" said a weary voice.

Harry pulled himself away and choked back a gasp as he saw Damien's hazel eyes flutter open and look wearily at him.

"D-Damy?" Harry asked, not daring to believe it.

Damien looked at Harry and then closed his eyes. He tried to take a deep breath but ended up crying out in pain. He brought his free hand up and touched his chest gingerly.

"I, I think all my bones are b-broken" he said as Harry helped him to sit up.

“But I...I don’t understand. He hit you with the killing curse! I saw him hit you.” Harry stammered, his emotions draining him of his remaining strength.

Damien brought his pain filled eyes over to look at his brother. Gingerly he lifted his wand and, wincing terribly, he placed it onto his own bruised chest.

“Finite Incantanteum” he whispered.

Before Harry’s eyes a black stoned pendant appeared around Damien’s neck. Harry was speechless. He had seen Damien take off the Layhoo Jisteen and had it over to Voldemort. He couldn’t figure out what had just happened. Then understanding hit him and Harry turned to look at his brother in amazement.

It was all an act! Damien hadn’t really handed over the Layhoo Jisteen. He had hidden the real one with an invisibility spell and had given Voldemort a fake pendant, one that he had manufactured to look identical to the Layhoo Jisteen. Harry looked at his brother again, not quite believing he had tricked Voldemort like that.

“I swore I wouldn’t take it off” Damien said as he smiled at Harry’s expression.

Harry looked at the black stone. It looked untarnished, even though Harry knew it had absorbed the ultimate dark curse. That was when Harry noticed a swirl of green mist swimming within the black stone. Harry didn’t know that the stone could protect against the killing curse. He figured that no one knew that the stone had that kind of power as no one had ever used it for protection.

Just then Harry saw his mum and dad rushing towards them. They quickly came over and had Harry and Damien in a tight embrace. Harry felt the hot tears run down his own face as he embraced his parents, knowing how close he came to never seeing them again. Dumbledore and the rest of the Aurors had gathered around them as well. James and Sirius helped Damien to stand up and started to lead him away.

"Oh God!" Damien exclaimed as he spotted what was left of Voldemort.

That was when it hit Harry, the severity of what he had done. He gasped at the sight as he stood only a few steps away. He was glad that Remus and Frank had a good grip on him because he felt he would have collapsed otherwise.

He had killed Voldemort! He had actually destroyed him. Harry felt his vision begin to blur. He stumbled a few steps before his legs gave out under him. As his world went black, all Harry remembered were Voldemort's ruby red eyes looking at him with disbelief before flames had engulfed him. The words that he had refused to believe came swimming back to him.

'Neither can live, while the other survives.'

xx

Okay, a short epilogue will follow, so keep an eye out for that. Any loose ties, like Lucius, the aftermath of the battle and Ginny will be sorted there. Please review! Cheers :)

Please visit the forum to discuss the possibility of a Sequel! Cheers!!

Chapter Sixty Five

The evening was pleasantly warm and the sound of laughter was ringing in the air. The large room was filled with people, all dressed up for the occasion. The Minister was enjoying himself immensely as he stopped and made conversation with many of the occupants of the room.

James sighed heavily as he looked away from the Minister's beaming face. He stood in one corner of the room, trying to melt into the background. 'If one more person comes up to me and congratulates me, I swear to Merlin...' he thought irately to himself. Sirius joined him in the corner of the room and smiled weakly at his friend.

"Not having fun?" he asked with a cheeky look in his eyes.

James smiled back as he dropped his head wearily.

"I knew it was going to be like this, but, I just can't seem to control my annoyance at this whole thing." He answered.

"Most of the people here don't even know what really happened and I don't think they even want to know. They're too caught up with their stupid celebrations to even stop for a second and ask how it happened!" he continued.

Sirius didn't say anything. He knew that there was going to be tension in the air when he was first told about the celebration Minister Fudge was holding, that they *had* to be a part of. He gave his friend an understanding look and turned his gaze away. He knew that deep down, James was just as happy at Voldemort's death as the rest of the wizarding world. But he couldn't quite join in the celebrations because, mostly, it reminded him of how close he came to losing Harry. It really was a miracle that Harry had survived. If he hadn't come into his full power when he did, he would have been dead as soon as Voldemort's Markeline curse hit him.

Sirius was still left a little confused as to what had exactly happened. He knew that once a Witch or Wizard turned seventeen, they would 'come into their power' in the sense that they would receive their full magical powers. He remembered when he had come into his powers.

He felt a tingle spread through his body. His fingertips buzzed and he had felt the magical energy crackle around him. It was the best feeling in the world. It died down after the first two minutes.

With Harry, it was different. Dumbledore had explained that Harry had learned to use his powers as an instinct from a very early age. It was part of Voldemort's training. Harry was able to manipulate his magical core better than most wizards. It was because of this that Harry survived.

When he turned seventeen and his magical powers came into full power, his instinct took over and his magic performed whatever it had to in order to survive. Firstly it blocked Voldemort's curse from hitting him. It then healed him as Harry was dangerously close to death. Harry had managed to heal himself, something that most wizards couldn't do. Dumbledore had told them that he didn't think Harry would ever be able to do that again. It was one of those things that had to be done subconsciously. If attempted again while in full awareness, it would most probably not work.

Sirius looked around the room, full of laughing people. He spotted Lily, deep in conversation with Alice and Molly. He could see that she looked just as uncomfortable with the whole party as he and James felt. Remus was being bombarded with questions about the battle by a group of nosy people. Sirius sighed heavily; it had been three weeks since that fateful battle that had ended the war. Sirius found that the general public came after them and asked them questions as opposed to trying to talk with Harry. He was grateful about that. The last thing Harry needed was people trying to get him to talk about that. Whatever had happened, the wizarding world was still afraid of Harry. His coming of age was witnessed by the people of Hogsmeade. He had killed Voldemort in front of everyone and had done so without brandishing a wand at him. While everyone was eternally grateful for what Harry had done, they also recognised the raw power Harry held. It was something that most took as a warning sign to stay away. They wouldn't be annoying him any time soon.

Sirius scanned the room again. Where was his godson? He had not seen him since arriving at this godforsaken place!

“Harry still here?” Sirius asked, looking at James again.

James nodded his head stiffly and looked at Sirius with sad eyes.

“I really wish he didn’t have to come. I’m so angry at myself for forcing him. He shouldn’t have to deal with this.” James said glumly.

Sirius patted James sympathetically on the shoulder.

“It wasn’t your decision mate, Harry knows that. He knows that Fudge would make a huge deal about him not coming. After all, tonight is supposed to be about Harry defeating Voldemort.” Sirius consoled his friend.

James still wished Harry didn’t have to deal with this. After everything his son went through, this was the last thing he needed.

At the other end of the room were two glass doors. They led to a fancy looking balcony. It was a warm night, but no one was outside. They were all inside drinking and rejoicing the fall of the darkest wizard of their time. All, except one. Harry stood, leaning against the balcony. His emerald eyes were staring ahead of him, at nothing specific. The warm air ruffled his dark locks and Harry tiredly ran a hand through his hair. His fingers brushed his scar and Harry stopped to gently trace the lightening bolt shaped scar. His scar had not hurt. It had not hurt once since that day. Harry knew it sounded crazy but it felt strange that it didn’t hurt anymore. Even at times, when Voldemort wasn’t feeling any particular emotions, Harry would still feel a slight twinge in his scar. He had learnt to block that pain out. Now his head felt strangely empty without that pain.

Harry sighed heavily and dropped his head away from his forehead. He couldn’t believe that he was gone. Voldemort was really gone and it was he, Harry, who was responsible for that. Harry didn’t remember what had happened after he passed out that day. He had woken up two days later and found himself in St Mungos. Damien was being treated for his broken bones and many of the Aurors were recovering there as well.

Harry knew that everyone meant well, but he couldn’t help close up every time anyone would bring up the final battle. He didn’t want to

think about what happened, how it happened. He didn't want to remember how Voldemort's eyes had looked at him with disbelief as the flames engulfed him.

Harry shut his eyes and tried to let out a slow breath. He knew that memory would haunt him for the rest of his life. Dumbledore had tried to talk to him, but Harry had just shut him out like he normally did. He didn't want to hear anything else about the damn prophecy!

His mind wandered to what had happened earlier today. Draco had left to join his mum. He had come over to see Harry before he left. At first the two friends didn't quite know what to say or do. They had stood silently while waiting for the other to say something. Harry had never thought it was possible for Draco to go against Voldemort for his sake. He had never given Draco that much credit. He had always thought of Draco to be an opportunist who wouldn't risk his neck for anyone. It had touched him deeply that Draco had risked so much to save him. He had reluctantly said his goodbyes. Draco gave Harry a quick embrace just before leaving.

"If and when this all falls apart, you know where to find me." Draco whispered in his ear before letting him go and walking away.

Harry had just smiled in response. He should have known that Draco would make a last attempt to make Harry come with him. Harry had watched as Draco apparated away with Snape, he watched as his childhood friend, his first true friend, left to start a new life somewhere else.

Harry had heard no news about Lucius Malfoy. The blond Death Eater had not come to Hogsmeade. He had apparated away from Riddle Manor and had disappeared. There was a small number of Death Eaters that had run away from the battle scene. The Ministry was searching for them but Harry knew that the search would be called off sooner or later. No one really cared anymore. Voldemort was gone and everything else seemed less important in comparison to that.

Harry felt the guilt tear into him every time someone said Voldemort's name. He knew that Voldemort had meant to kill Damien. He would have killed him next, but still, Harry couldn't help feel guilty. He had

never thought he could have destroyed him. He knew that he had destroyed Voldemort just like he had destroyed the Horcruxes.

Voldemort had ordered Harry to be tortured for almost twenty four hours. He had hurt him when he was only a child. He had taken everything away from him, but after all that, Harry still couldn't bear to hurt him. But when Harry thought that Voldemort had taken away his brother, he had wanted nothing else but to completely destroy him. It wasn't an accident. Harry had momentarily wanted to destroy Voldemort. It was that moment of pure rage and anger that had reached into Voldemort and had ripped apart the last remaining piece of his soul. The darkness within him had truly won. It had taken over him and had killed the man he had once vowed to protect. Harry shook his head as he heard the laughter ring from the room behind him. They were all praising him for getting rid of the Dark Lord, when they had no idea how much darkness was inside him. Harry forcefully shut out these thoughts. It would do nothing but make matters worse if he let himself think like that. He was not like Voldemort! He was not like him!

Harry forced his thoughts towards his parents. He was grateful of one thing. His parents and friends hadn't brought up anything about Voldemort. They didn't ask him how he was, or how he felt about everything that had happened. They treated him like they would normal. His mum had made him eat nearly everything in sight when he came home from hospital, and to a certain extent, that was pretty normal for her.

Harry heard footsteps behind him and prepared to snap at whoever was approaching him. He turned around with a scowl already on his face. His features relaxed when he saw the four familiar faces, smiling at him. Harry had slipped out to get some air. He should have known that the four would follow him soon enough.

"This has to be the most mundane party I've ever been to!" Ron commented as he came to stand next to Harry.

Harry smiled as he knew that, secretly Ron was enjoying himself. He was only saying that because he could see how bored Harry was.

"The food's not bad though." Damien said as he propped himself to sit on top of the balcony.

Harry didn't say anything but took the moment to observe his younger brother. Damien was fully aware of how close he came to dying. His breastbone had cracked and several of his ribs had broken when the killing curse had impacted with him. That small, black stoned pendant around his neck had taken the curse into itself but hadn't been able to protect Damien from the brutal force of the dark curse.

Damien still had the pendant around his neck, even though he had been told that it was useless now. The Layhoo Jisteen was destroyed once the killing curse impacted with it. You could still see the green mist swirling within the black stone.

Damien had refused to part with it. He told his parents that he didn't care if the stone no longer protected him. It was his first Christmas gift from his brother and he wasn't going to take it off.

"You alright?"

Harry broke out of his thoughts to look at Hermione. He could see that all four of them were looking at him with understanding in their eyes. They all knew that Harry would rather be anywhere else than here, celebrating the demise of the Dark Lord.

Harry wasn't going to lie to them. He never had, so why should he do so now?

"I just want tonight to end. I don't know why I let dad drag me here in the first place." Harry answered as he stuck his hands into the pockets of his robes. At least his parents hadn't insisted he wore fancy robes.

"You're not the only one who doesn't want to be here. It looks like mum and dad are having a terrible time." Damien said with a smirk.

"Good" Harry answered.

He had been blackmailed by his mum and dad into coming here. He knew how it would look if Harry didn't go to the party that was

supposedly been thrown in his honour. Harry couldn't care less, but he knew that his dad would have to deal with all sort of trouble. He had let his momentary guilt overtake him and had agreed to come along. Now, he wished he had not bothered, regardless of the consequences.

"You really don't want to be here, do you?" Damien asked as he surveyed his brother.

Harry didn't answer. The answer was obvious.

Damien climbed back off the balcony and stood in front of his brother. He took out something small from his pocket and held it up for Harry to see. Harry watched confusedly as Damien held up a miniature version of his Nimbus 3000.

Before Harry could ask what he was doing, Damien looked down at the broomstick and ran his hand over it. Before Harry's eyes, the broomstick grew to its normal size. Damien stood holding the broomstick in his hand, a wide smile on his face.

"You're not the only Potter who can do wandless magic." He said as Harry looked at him in amazement.

Hermione nearly had tears of joy and pride in her eyes.

Damien handed Harry the broom. Harry took it and looked at it with a confused expression.

"If you don't want to be here, then you shouldn't" Ron explained.

It seemed that the four of them had planned this beforehand. Harry looked at his brother in shock.

"Damy, I don't think that would a good idea..." Harry started but was cut off by Damien.

"Tonight's your night. You should do what you want to do." He said with a smile.

Harry looked affectionately at his brother. He stared at the broom again. The idea of flying away from here, from all of these people and enjoying tonight his way was too appealing. He looked back up at Damien, a last thought creeping in his mind.

“What about dad? He’ll get really annoyed with you.” Harry asked.

“I’ve gotten into plenty of trouble for you. What’s one more time?” Damien said with a smirk firmly in place.

Harry gave him a smirk back and let go of the broom, letting it hover in mid air. He mounted the broom effortlessly and steered it to hover above the balcony. He looked back at the group and focused his emerald eyes on the red haired girl in the black dress. He came in a little closer and looked directly at her. He had not really spoken to Ginny after coming back. Ginny had, like always, given Harry his space. She had not harassed him about the kiss they shared in Riddle Manor or asked about where their relationship was going.

Ginny smiled warmly at Harry as he hovered near the end of the balcony, looking intently at her.

“So, do you want to come with me now, or would you rather I come back to rescue you later on in the night” Harry asked, a cheeky glint in his bright green eyes.

Ginny seemed thrown by the question but recovered quickly. She crossed her arms over her chest and gave Harry an equally cheeky look.

“Well, if I come with you just like that, without any drama happening, won’t that be too normal for us?”

Harry leant forward and held out his hand. Ginny took it, her heart hammering at her insides. She settled behind him, arms wrapped around his waist.

“When it comes to us, Ginny, nothing is ever normal.” Harry said with a smile on his face.

Damien and Hermione looked ecstatic with Harry and Ginny, finally being open with one another. Ron smiled as he saw the look of happiness spread on his sister's face.

The fact that Harry wanted to spend time with Ginny and had referred to them as 'us' was as close as Harry was ever going to come to saying that he loved Ginny. Harry placed one hand over Ginny's and gave it a small squeeze.

"Just make sure you come home before sunrise. Otherwise, dad will have sent out another search party" Damien said as Harry prepared to take off.

Harry only smiled back and then gave them a last look filled with gratitude, before taking off, into the night sky.

The three teens watched them for a moment before making their way back inside. Damien turned around and stopped in his tracks as he saw his dad standing at the balcony doors.

James didn't look angry though. In fact, he looked the exact opposite. His hazel eyes were fixed on Harry's form, flying higher and higher into the sky and a smile graced his lips. Damien relaxed as he saw his dad look over at him with a smile.

Damien walked over to him and smiled as his dad put an arm over his shoulder.

"I never had a brother. Padfoot and Moony were the closest things I had. I know that they would have done that for me." James said as he kissed the top of Damien's head.

Damien relaxed and looked up at his father.

"Dad, Harry will get over this. He'll be alright, won't he?" he asked quietly.

James knew that Damien was referring to Harry's guilt at killing Voldemort and his refusal to open up and talk about it. James looked up into the sky, focusing on the small dot that was Harry.

"It'll take time and it won't be easy, but I think Harry will be just fine."
James said with a comforting smile.

He led Damien inside; preparing himself for the tantrum the Minister was going to throw at losing his guest of honour. He couldn't care less though. All that mattered was that Harry was happy. James made a silent promise to himself that from now on, no matter what happened, Harry would always come first.

He closed the doors leading to the balcony and smiled deeply as the sound of Harry and Ginny laughing, echoed through the air.

The End.

xx

Well...I guess that's it. (sob) I can't thank you all enough. All of you gave me the inspiration I needed to complete this. It's my first fic and I had no idea what to do at times, but your kind words really helped me. You guys rock!! I hope everyone has a wonderful, magic filled Xmas and a great new year.

P.S. I haven't decided whether or not I'm doing a sequel, so please head over to the forum and tell me what you think. If you think there should be a sequel, then please give me your views on what it should contain. Cheers!!